UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
School of Global Studies

GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET

A qualitative study of foreign aid and China's role in economic and human development in Zambia

Master Thesis in Global Studies 30 hec
Spring Semester 2023
Author: Sue-Ellen Njekwa Ryberg
Supervisor: Jan Bachmann
Word Count: 19,840

Abstract

The precedent of unrivaled lending in Zambia, to a great degree, and courtesy to the World Bank, has generated a normative and financial frame that puts forward economic prosperity as only being made manifest through lending in perpetuality. Zambia has in recent decades found itself in between both West and East spheres of power in terms of foreign aid and this has had an impact on its development. This study is based on a qualitative thematic analysis approach exploring the dynamic interlinkages between foreign aid on the one hand and economic and human development in Zambia on the other hand during the period of 2010-2020. More specifically I answer the following research questions: How has foreign aid towards Zambia changed in the last decade? What is the role of China within foreign assistance to Zambia? And what are the interlinkages between Chinese loans and economic and human development in Zambia? This study connects to the theoretical perspective of the dependency theory which is used to help interpret the data and propose explanations of the underlying causes and impacts related to that of foreign aid and economic development in Zambia. The results of this indicate that the impact foreign aid has had on economic and human development in Zambia is mostly undesirable, due to it not being distributed across all tiers of society, in particular the half of the populace living in poverty.

Keywords: Zambia, foreign aid, development, dependency, debt trap, Chinese loans

Acknowledgements

This paper, with the labors of reaching a state of enlightenment, is the culmination of months of work and reflection on foreign aid and aid related issues to Zambia. First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Jan Bachmann who guided and helped finalize this research project. The meetings and conversations were salient in motivating me to think off the beaten path from multiple standpoints to form a broad and objective critique. I wish to extend my special thanks to my husband Peter for providing counsel and a sounding board when required. I would also like to thank my friends and family who offered support and set me off on the road to this MSc through deep insights into the study. Lastly, I wish to acknowledge the help provided by the School of Global Studies.

Sue-Ellen

Acronyms

OECD: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

ODA: Official Development Assistance

SAP: Structural Adjustment Program

DAC: Development Assistance Committee

DSA: Debt Sustainability Analysis

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

IDA: International Development Association

IMF: International Monetary Fund

WTO: World Trade Organization

UN: United Nations

FDI: Foreign Direct Investment

FTA: Free Trade Agreements

FOCAC: Forums on China-Africa Cooperation

OOF: Other Official Flows

BRI: Belt and Road Initiative

AFDB: African Development Bank

RFI: Resource For Infrastructure

HDI: Human Development Index

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1. Introduction

Foreign aid has on occasions been a striking accomplishment and an unmitigated failure. Sub-Saharan Africa is often cited as the paradigmatic illustration of the detrimental political ramifications of foreign aid (Goldsmith, 2001). It is alleged that donor aid surfaced as a nuanced form of dependence on Western countries. That being the case, it is a salient recognition that donor aid fosters the dependence of developing countries on First World countries (Kabonga, 2017). In recent years, the spread of liberal ideas is alleged to be partly attributed to foreign aid. Opponents of this idea, claim that foreign aid is presumed to encourage low-income states to develop, thus far, critics across the ideological spectrum accuse it of doing the opposite (Goldsmith, 2001). While scholars such as Mahbub ul Haq and Raúl Prebisch have approached the question of dependency from a non-Marxist perspective, while the likes of Theotônio dos Santos and Immanuel Wallerstein's views on dependency, mirror a Marxist orientation (Agebebi and Virtanen, 2017). The question remains why some impoverished countries are trapped, and others are not (Sachs, 2005 p.37).

Developing countries such as Zambia, have become reliant on donors as solution bearers to multifarious issues surrounding them. Contemporary aid has become a tool for development of the underdevelopment, for it is generating more employment and a need for economic consumption in the core countries, than in the periphery (Kabonga, 2017). Ultimately, the subtle aid culture is claimed to have left African countries like Zambia: more debt-ridden, inflation-prone, vulnerable to the quirks or unpredictability of the currency markets, and more attractive to higher-quality investment (Moyo, 2009a). Amid the 1980s and 1990s African economies, including Zambia's, have encountered a sequence of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) aimed at boosting investment levels and ameliorating allocation of investment resources (Simutanyi, 1996; The World Bank, 2017; Chikuba, 2018).

Subsequent to the World Bank involvement in economic reform in Zambia, during the period of 1983, aid conditionality has been reputed to be a salient part of the Zambian political equation (Rankner, 2016). Invariably, foreign aid, albeit the conditionality, is recognized as a vital tool in the development of many countries including the likes of Zambia. Alesina and Dollar (2000), claim that it appears that while aid can be good in some cases, it can make people slaves to other nations. Although the Zambian government has at times protested against the set conditions, and attempted to go at it alone, it has always had to go back to the negotiating table with the donor community led by the IMF (International Monetary Fund), and the World

Bank (Rankner, 2016). The World Bank (1998) claimed that the recent shifts in the global economic and political environment, notably the end of the Cold war, and the surge in private capital flows to the developing world, have affected the landscape for development assistance in a way that has left many questioning the very existence of aid (The World Bank, 1998).

The purpose of this paper is to explore the dynamic interlinkages between foreign aid and Chinese loans on the one hand and economic and human development on the other hand. The basis for why Zambia is the chosen case study is in the view of the fact that Zambia's debt is claimed to be one of the fastest-increasing ones in Africa with China being a major creditor and provider for development. Additionally, Zambia has a track record of large volumes of external assistance allocated to the country since the mid-1980s, and these large volumes of aid, have been devoted to debt, and debt-service reduction (Masaki, 2018; IMF, 2019; The World Bank, 2017). Zambia's external public debt has risen dramatically in recent years, from 4.25 billion US dollar in 2010 to 24 billion US dollar in 2020 (The World Bank, 2023). The country's foreign and domestic debt are claimed to have reached unsustainable levels, and as a consequence, affected Zambia's macroeconomic performance. In the past decade, Zambia's total debt as a percentage of gross domestic product (GPD), has increased fivefold (The World Bank, 2023). The aforementioned coupled with growth factors, increasing debt, default on debt, and the stagnating poverty reduction, have led to the country being highly dependent on foreign aid (Ofstad and Tjønneland, 2019). China is understood to have come to the fore as a paramount provider of finance for infrastructure development in Zambia and is also claimed to be a vital developmental player in energy, transport, and telecommunications. China has further tried to present itself as a donor that is different from the Western and multilateral donors and development funders. The 2013 launch of China's Grand Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), labeled as a worldwide network of Chinese funded infrastructure and development projects, is stated to have reinforced this role. At the same time, BRI is maintained to have enabled Zambia to improve on infrastructure development and enhance economic growth (Ofstad and Tjønneland, 2019).

Consequently, China maintains to have more equal terms, than the multilateral institutions of the World Bank and IMF, claiming, it is also a developing country that does an immense amount of work to lift hundreds of millions of people out of poverty in the last decades (Ofstad and Tjønneland, 2019). Although China's critics have focused on the scale of Zambia's Chinese debt, it is stated that 45 percent of Zambia's borrowing is owed to lenders that are not

China-based, while its Chinese debt represents just 17.6 percent of total external debt payments. Zambia's government directly asked private US creditors such as BlackRock, Zambia's largest bondholder, to agree to cancel at least two-thirds of the debt owed (Gbadamosi, 2022). China is not solely responsible for Zambia's economic distress but does play an important role and I will discuss this in this thesis. Zambia borrowed heavily to fund infrastructure with the highest per capita Chinese debts in Africa that were in excess of 10.1 billion US dollar in 2020, yet these modernization projects are said to have failed to deliver sustained economic growth in Zambia (Zajontz, 2022; Gort and Brooks, 2023, p.839).

1.1 Background

It can be argued that there have been shifts in the space of international development finance in the last decades (Gort and Brooks, 2023, p.839). The Washington-dominated multilateral institutions of the World Bank, IMF and the World Trade Organization (WTO) that set on the course of lending to the global South in the course of the late 20th century, have now been joined by new sources of bilateral and private capital, such as the Chinese-led development finance (Wang et al., 2014; Gort and Brooks, 2023, p.839). Latter-day, China has become a strong player in advancing sustainable development, and its lending practices are significant in that China, has advanced cooperation among developing countries in the Global South. China has also made tangible contributions towards poverty eradication, and debt relief in the developing world (Wang et al., 2014). The Chinese encroachment on Western financial hegemony in Zambia has not gone unheeded and has simultaneously been met with allured widespread attention (Gort and Brooks, 2023, p.839; Rapanyane, 2021; Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021; Wang et al., 2014; The World Bank, 2017). In October 2017, the joint IMF /World Bank Debt Sustainability Analysis (DSA) concluded that Zambia was under a risk of debt distress (World Bank, 2022; IMF, 2019; The World Bank, 2017; Chikuba, 2018). The Zambian government's enormous debt load is claimed to have become a fundamental issue on the economy as a whole (Ofstad and Tjønneland, 2019).

At the end of 2017, the World Bank published a report on Zambia about the decades of punishing sorrow that culminated from 40 years of Western lending. The report drew on how Zambia should restrain from borrowing from sources outside of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) co-operation program, in order to cease its sorrow, specifically from

Chinese sources (Smith et al., 2017; Gort and Brooks, 2023, p.843; The World Bank, 2017). Concurrently, Zambia's reliance on external financial support has diminished in recent years, notwithstanding the fact that foreign aid continues to account for a significant proportion of the Zambian national budget. It is purported that the decision-making process surrounding the allocation of aid in Zambia is highly centralized and politicized (Masaki, 2018).

Over the recent years, it is understood that the Zambian government ignored sound counsel, and strong warnings from independent economists, external actors, the World Bank, IMF, and international donors (Ofstad and Tjønneland, 2019). Today, Zambia is claimed to lie on the shoreline of a new so-called African debt tsunami (Gort and Brooks, 2023, p.839). It is important to note that this thesis uses the OECD Development Assistance Committee's standardized definition of aid as "official development assistance" (ODA), which is official financing given at concessional rates to developing countries, to promote economic development, and welfare in the recipient country (Riddell, 2008, p.38).

1.2 Aim of the thesis and research problem

The aim of this paper is to explore the dynamic interlinkages between foreign aid on the one hand and economic and human development in Zambia on the other hand during the period of 2010-2020. I will particularly focus on the role of China, because China has a history of engagement in Zambia, which has borrowed heavily from China to fund infrastructure and has the highest per capita Chinese debts in Africa.

- How has foreign aid towards Zambia changed in the last decade?
- What is the role of China within foreign assistance to Zambia?
- What are the interlinkages between Chinese loans, and economic and human development in Zambia?

1.3 Delimitations

The analysis of this single case study is limited to the existing literature which is relevant for the research subject. To utilize the existing literature, it is important to include a wide variety of sources for coding. Analysis of data obtained will be generalized only to the literature in this study (Bryman, 2018, p.60-63) other than the generalizability readers might discern from the qualitative findings (Bryman, 2018, p.64-65). A further delimitation is the source material that I use in this study. My material consists of secondary sources, rather than primary material. It proved difficult to access primary sources on the economic relationship between China and Zambia. Much of the data on loans and investments is not made public. Therefore, a considerable amount of the material is drawn from secondary sources. I will discuss this further in section 4 where I present how I gathered my material.

The country of interest in this study is Zambia, and I limit the time span of the study to the years 2010-2020. I make this choice, arguing that a decade should provide ample space to capture changes or trends, while on the other hand saving the time it would take to collect data from the very beginning that Zambia got its independence. This time period also saw several economic events of interest to my research problem. From 2010 to 2020, Zambia's debt increased from a debt- to-GDP ratio of slightly below 20% to above 100% of GDP (The World Bank, 2023). According to the World Bank and IMF between 2017 and 2019, Zambia's debt burden indicator worsened significantly. In spite of having the African continent's second largest copper deposits, Zambia's external debt surged to nearly 12 billion US dollar in 2019 (Africa News, 2020). Additionally, Zambia opted to bow out of a 42.5 million Eurobond repayment, making it the first African country to default on its debt during the Covid-19 pandemic (Africa News, 2020). This shows that the past decade in Zambia, and by approaching the subject at hand from the perspective of foreign aid on a meta level may provide insight in how aid affected development and growth in a country ravaged by economic turmoil.

1.4 Relevance to global studies and contribution of the thesis

This study has been propelled by the combination of sustainable growth trends, increasing debt, default on debt and the stagnating poverty reduction that Zambia has been experiencing in recent years. The analysis brought forward in this paper is a single case study of the dynamic interlinkages between foreign aid and economic and human development in Zambia. This study hopes to contribute to the bourgeoning debate on aid dependency in Zambia. Foreign aid is considered to carry a lasting impact with regard to humanitarian aid and development work. But it appears that foreign aid has become a subject matter of development economics.

Henceforth, the liberalization of trade and aid is maintained to be a bone of contention in global negotiations (Riddell, 2008, p.24). In consequence, this study hopes to contribute to the debate on aid dependency in Zambia using previous literature as a steppingstone. This is of interest, as a major player, in this case China, has stepped into the influence sphere that contains Zambia, and thus creating a clear interlinkage in terms of aid dependency between two countries: one economically weaker receiver and one economically stronger provider.

The 1940s are initially cited to be a phase in history when the modern era of foreign aid provision began. Events which transpired at that time informed and shaped aid giving for the next 50 years (Riddell, 2008, p.24). Over and above that, the events that occurred during the 1980s and the early 1990s were considered to be momentous years for international relations and for aid. Much like the demolition of the Berlin Wall which exemplified the end of the East-West divide and hence for some, the end of the need for aid (Riddell, 2008, p.38). Further on, dramatic shifts in global power relations, political, economic, and moral allegiances emerged. Latter-day, some former aid recipient countries such as China have now become important economic political powers in their own right (Wang et al., 2014). The purpose of this thesis is to address this gap: the illusion that foreign aid could have ceased past the era of the cold war, as the new economic players, in this case China, have taken an interest in Zambia, providing loans that contribute to deepen historical aid patterns that have been problematic for the development of Zambia.

In doing so I attempt to contribute to the literature on the link between aid and development and the unforeseen and other times, premeditated outcomes. This field is not only important for examining how global forces contribute to elevate or diminish a nation's long run prospects to develop to such a stage that it becomes economically independent. Economic freedom, for Zambia in particular, seems to be elusive albeit having gotten political freedom. The erstwhile governments, from colonial times, did not have to contend with global powers, for they, for the bidding of those same powers, functioned. Foreign aid has also not been well understood, for if there is any manufacturing of note, it would not be locally owned, and for the most part, these loans and foreign aid, go to such economic sectors, so that it begs the question of who the aid is going to, aside from the handlers on the economy on the side receiving the funds. Using dependency theory as a theoretical backbone for a thematic analysis I attempt to answer my research questions, and this is a main contribution of my thesis; the usage of dependency theory to examine the interlinkage between economic and human development and foreign aids and loans in Zambia.

1.5 Outline of the thesis

The rest of the thesis is outlined as follows. Section 2 serves as the starting point for the thesis, providing a historical background and a minor economic analysis. Section 3 provides the theoretical perspective, revolving around the dependence theory. Section 4 contains the research design, method, and the data description process. Section 5 contains the results retrieved from analyzing my material in accordance with my research questions chosen themes. Section 6 consists of an analysis and discussion of the results, and section 7 entails the conclusive section of the thesis.

2. Historical background and previous research

This section of the paper provides and establishes a more detailed context underlying the research of foreign aid pertaining to Zambia. It provides an overview of the key problems, and discusses the economical background of Zambia, history of foreign aid, decline in copper prices, aid flows, the logic behind Chinese aid, and the discourse of China-Zambia relations.

2.1 Economical background

In this section the Zambian economical background is presented. Before I get into the analysis itself, it is worthwhile to examine economic parameters for the chosen timespan. Figure 1 presents total aid from DAC and all the United Nations organizations to Zambia respectively, and gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. All figures are reported in US dollars. Inflows of aid appear to be stable from 2010 to 2020, the movements are not drastic, and the total amounts seem to be at the same level from start to end. GDP per capita has increased only to have a sharp decrease in 2019.

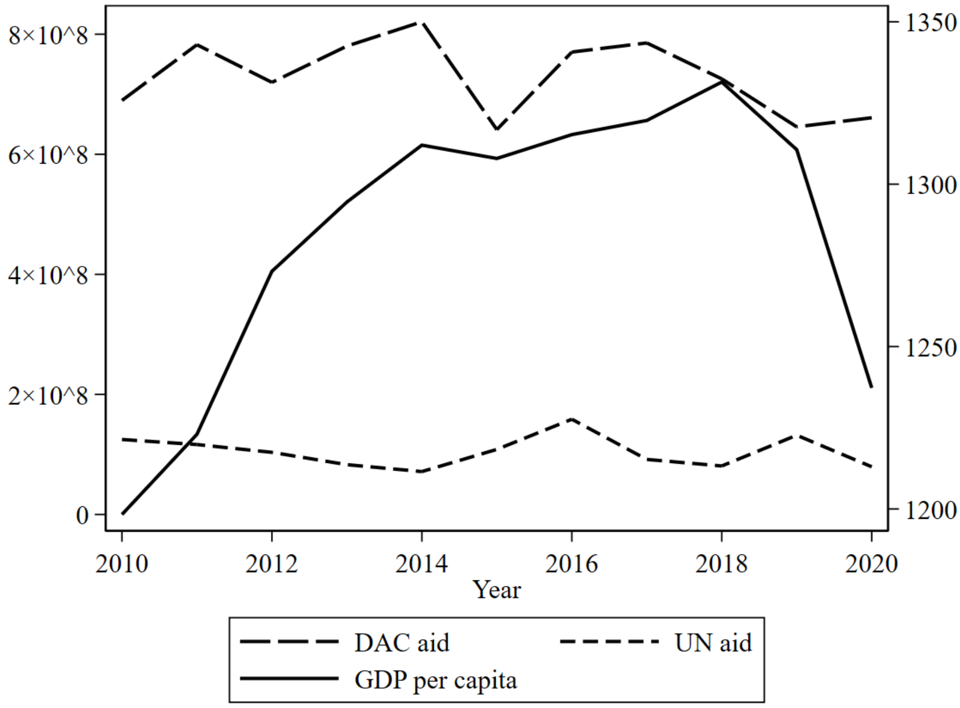

Figure 1. Aid to Zambia and Zambian GDP per capita in current US dollar 2010-2020

Note: DAC aid and UN aid on left y-axis, GDP per capita on right y-axis. Data collected from The World Bank: https://databank.worldbank.org

GDP per capita is a measure which takes population growth into account, hence giving a fairer picture of a country's economic growth, rather than just looking at growth in GDP. The measure does not provide any information on the distribution of growth, however, and should not carry much weight in my qualitative analysis. It is of course a starting point, and contributes to the story, but to see whether growth is distributed equally, or not, I look at the poverty rate. The share of the population back in 2010 living in poverty was 54,7 %, ten years later that share is 54,4 %. Which is a modest decrease at best. Considering that the population has grown over the years this development entails a larger number of people living in poverty. Poverty has hence increased; when I refer to poverty, I use the definition of it as living below the national poverty line, which means having less income than what is needed to cover basic needs in a Zambian context, which is approximately 216 Zambian Kwacha (116 SEK). Further, income inequality has risen according to the Gini coefficient, which has increased by about two percentage points from 0.56 in 2010 to 0.58 in 2020; the higher the coefficient (1 being the maximum) the more unequal is the distribution of income in the country. Zambia ranks among the higher tier of countries with rampant income inequality (The World Bank, 2023).

Despite growth in GDP per capita, it is thus clear that not everyone has been able to reap the gains. On the contrary it seems that half of the population have not participated in this growth. This highlights a shortcoming of the GDP per capita measure as an indicator of general prosperity. To make matters more interesting I plot total government debt (as a percentage of GDP in US dollars) in figure 2. The graph conveys a clear growing trend, where government debt has been growing in size over the past decade. During this decade, total debt has increased fivefold, but some caution should be taken when interpreting the sharp increase from 2019 to 2020. That last bump upwards can in part be explained by the decrease in GDP per capita (and to an extent GDP) for that year, hence making the percentage share of debt larger as GDP shrank during that year. Not taking the decrease in GDP into account, however, still leaves us with a threefold increase in total debt, from 2010 to 2018, during which GDP also grew. It seems like Zambia in the past years has faced increased debt, coupled with stable inflows of aid.

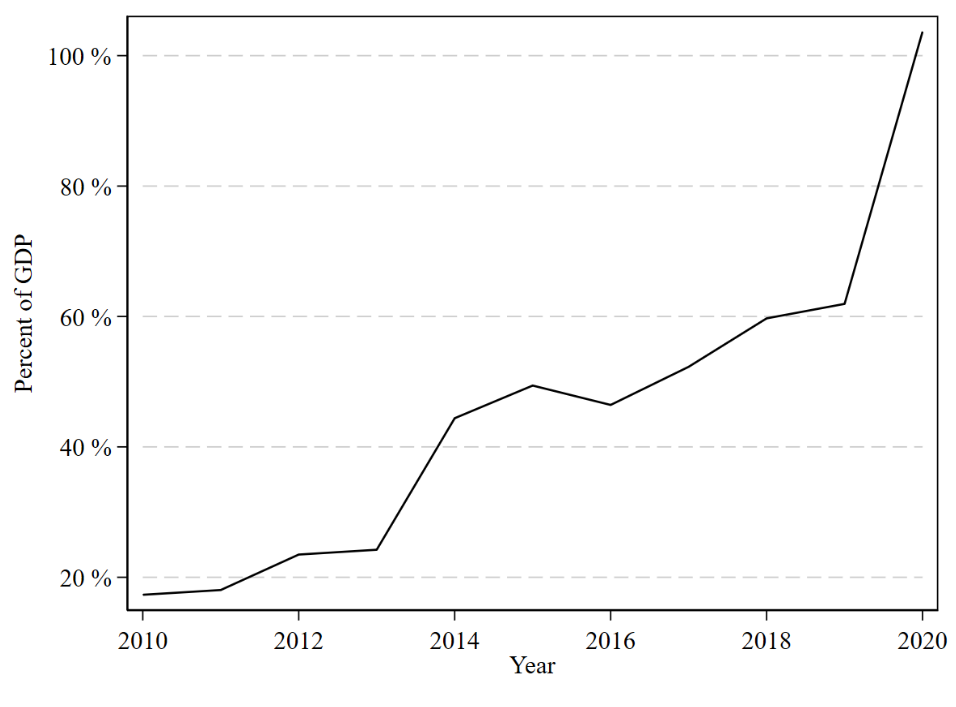

Figure 2. Total government debt of Zambia 2010-2020

Note: Total government debt (% of GDP). Data collected from The World Bank: https://databank.worldbank.org

Looking at economic parameters can only tell us a part of the story. I also look at the Human Development Index (HDI), which in addition to GDP accounts for life expectancy and education. A value of 1 implies good grades for all variables. The higher the share the better. Zambia's HDI reaches a peak in 2019, following a long positive upward trend, and has since then declined. Sweden had in 2019 a rating of 0.94, for the sake of comparison (The Global Economy, 2023). Figure 3 presents Zambia's HDI from the beginning of the century to 2020. I include an extra decade to show the past trend, and how the HDI's growth has slowed down in recent years, despite the influx of foreign aid and loans.

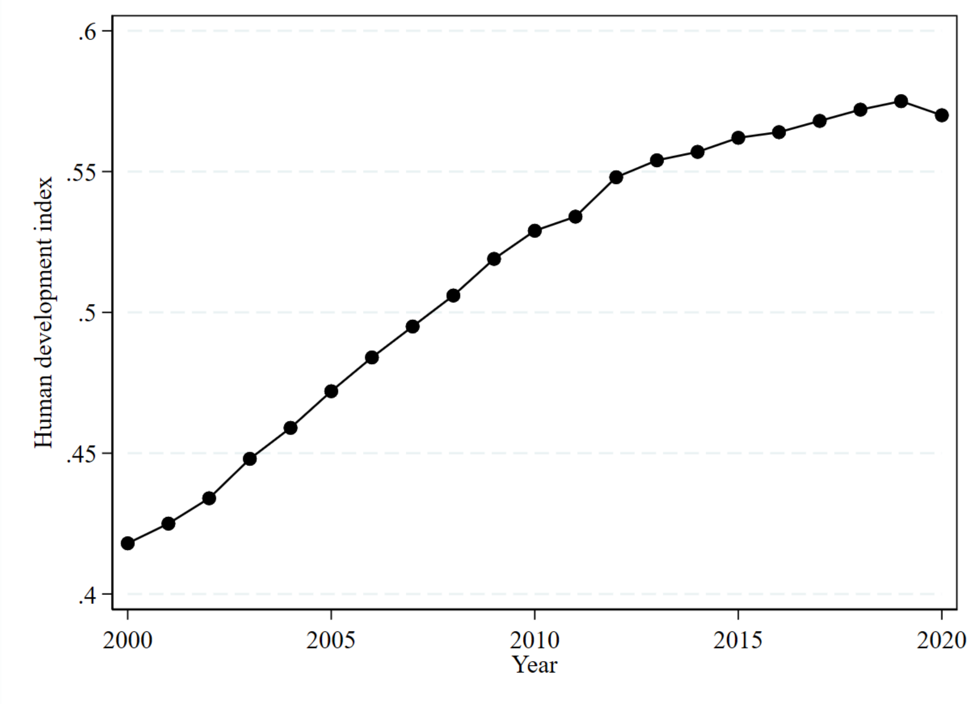

Figure 3. Human development index of Zambia 2000-2020

Note: Data collected from Transparency International: https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/zambia

Compiling all this statistical evidence paints a bleak picture. Despite increases in GDP per capita it is clear that the gains are not distributed equally among the populace. Debt, poverty, and corruption have all seen increases during 2010 to 2020, despite a steady influx of foreign aid and loans. This short quantitative analysis acts as a steppingstone for my qualitative analysis in which I attempt to disentangle these above-mentioned developments in order to answer my research questions.

2.2 History of foreign aid

In this section, I provide the historical background of foreign aid. Historical evidence suggests that the scope, and structure of foreign aid, can be traced to two significant establishments following World War II, such as the implementation of the Marshall Plan, which was a sponsored package to rehabilitate the economies of 17 Western and South-European countries, the founding of the major international organizations, along with the UN, IMF, and the World Bank (Riddell, 2008, p.38). The aforementioned international organizations have played a vital role in administering international funds, evaluating the impact of foreign aid along with determining the qualifications for the receipt of aid (Riddell, 2008, p.38; Gort and Brooks, 2023, p.839). The world political state of affairs changed in the aftermath of that war, and foreign aid soon became a tool to gain political clients (Riddell, 2008, p.38). Subsequently, in the period of 1960 the International Development Association (IDA) was established as an institution to give soft loans at low rates for long-term economic development in "Third World" countries (Bindra, 2018).

Present-day, changes have occurred, and are continuing to take place in the realm of international relations which are altering the ways in which states understand their obligations and responsibilities (Ridell, 2008, p.6; Pankaj, 2005). The most substantial work undertaken to develop a set of operational definitions of what constitutes foreign aid, has been led by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Ridell, 2008, p.23; Gort and Brooks, 2023, p.843). The OECD, which is an influential committee, was established in 1960 by the leading donor governments to coordinate and promote aid from donor governments (Ridell, 2008, p.18). DAC is maintained to have adopted the ODA as the gold standard of foreign aid in 1969, and today, it still remains the main source of financing for development aid. At this moment in time, foreign aid continues to constitute a salient part of the global resource transfer from the developed, to the developing countries (Yuan et al., 2022, p.13). Hitherto, a large number of these developing countries are still dependent on foreign aid (Pankaj, 2005; Dunford, 2020). Not only has ODA continued to expand over the past 55 years but has grown to become a key part of the architecture of international relations, as more, and more countries have become donors, and none has stopped providing aid (Ridell, 2008, p.23).

2.3 The logic behind Chinese foreign aid

China is claimed to be Africa's largest bilateral trading partner and largest provider of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) (Rapanyane, 2021). According to Zhang et al. (2022) China has a long history of providing aid to other developing countries. Chinese aid started during the early course of the 1950s (The state council, 2011) by providing aid to its socialist neighbors, until it expanded its aid to non-socialist countries in Asia and Africa, including Zambia in 1964 (Zhang et al., 2022; Yuan et al., 2022, p.16). Zambia's first close encounter with China was via platforms such as the Tazara Railway (Agebebi and Virtanen, 2017; Wang et al., 2014; Gort and Brooks, 2023, p.840). The aim of this major infrastructure project was to link Zambia to the port of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. The railway was perceived and presented as a symbol of China- Africa friendship (Carmody et al., 2012; Yuan et al., 2022, p.17; Scott, 2019, p.181).

Between 1974 and 1994, per capita income declined by 50 %, making Zambia the twenty-fifth poorest country in the world. On account on this, Zambia became dependent on international aid and much of which was conditioned on internal reforms, especially the privatization of state-owned enterprises which began in 1992 (Simutanyi, 1996; Zambian Business Times, 2017; Ofstad and Tjønneland, 2019; Masaki, 2018). It is maintained that one of the greatest challenges was the privatization of the country's copper mines which is Zambia's prime exporter (Scott; 2019, p.173-174; Ofstad and Tjønneland, 2019; Masaki, 2018; Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021). Policy influences changed during the implementation of the market-driven economic system that covered the period of 1991-2013. This provided incentives for investors in mining to which a substantial majority of Chinese investors in Zambia had taken advantage of these provisions and established a major foothold in Zambia's mining industry (Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021).

The 2006 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) was a watershed in the expansion of Chinese loans (Zhang et al., 2022; Yuan et al., 2022, p.17). At the Forums on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), Chinese president Xi Jinping stressed that China's cooperation with African countries worked based on mutual benefit (win-win), reciprocity, along with common prosperity (Zhang et al., 2022; Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021; Mulakala and Ji, 2021; State Council Information Office, 2021, p.11). Financial resources provided by China for foreign aid comprise grants, interest free loans, and concessional loans. China presents its views on major policy issues for public consumption and development assistance through white papers. China has since released three white papers during the year 2011, 2014 and in January

2021 which define China’s approach to foreign assistance (Yuan et al., 2022, p.13; Chinese Government 2021; Mulakala and Ji, 2021; Zhang et al., 2022; State Council Information Office, 2021, p.4). These aid policy documents provide a solid foundation for the discourse analysis of China's foreign aid policy. In its 2021 white paper titled “China’s International Development Cooperation in the New Era” (State Council Information Office, 2021, p.3; Yuan et al., 2022, p.13-14). The Chinese government emphasizes that China itself is a developing country, and that its aid works in the framework of South-South cooperation, and that China itself should be able to benefit from the process of aid giving (Zhang et al., 2022; Mulakala and Ji, 2021; State Council Information Office, 2021, p.3; Yuan et al., 2022, p.13; The state council, 2011).

The Chinese government states that it has been upgrading its foreign assistance to a model of international development cooperation. Equally important, is that China’s ambition is to take a more proactive outlook in foreign aid and advance towards a model of international development cooperation by linking with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development along with BRI, as a platform to attain key development goals (Yuan et al., 2022, p.13; Mulakala and Ji, 2021; State Council Information Office, 2021, p.11). Furthermore, China has rapidly grown as an emerging donor with a volume that can rival that of other major donors and lenders. During the course of 2013, China introduced the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) which is a plan that aims to construct a modern silk road that connects a vast region covering Asia, Europe, and Africa (Zhang et al., 2022; Mulakala and Ji, 2021; State Council Information Office, 2021, p.11).

China is also ready to strengthen cooperation with Zambia in various fields under BRI and within the framework of FOCAC. Various types of finance are provided by three policy banks, China Development Bank, and the (China Exim Bank) the Export-Import Bank of China, and the Agricultural Development Bank of China. These banks are responsible for providing loans to carry out agriculture and infrastructure projects (Carmody et al., 2022; Zhang, 2018; Dunford, 2020). The Chinese Exim Bank has been the major lender of government-to-government loans in Zambia (Yuan et al., 2022, p.19). These loans have involved a direct investment into Chinese contractors, bypassing the Zambian local economy almost entirely (Zajontz, 2022).

2.4 Decline in copper prices

This section presents a brief history of the decline in copper prices in the hope of understanding the future of the mining industry in Zambia. It is vital to understand the role of the state in economic management particularly in a country like Zambia which is dependent on one major natural resource, copper, for its development. Zambia has struggled for decades with high levels of national debt and this problem is connected to copper exports (Scott, 2019, p.168; IMF, 2019; The World Bank, 2017).

Zambia has gone through dynamic political changes, and international donors have maintained a sturdy presence in the country through the years (Masaki, 2018; Zambian Business Times, 2017). Northern Rhodesia, a name given after Cecil Rhodes, on 24th October 1964, became one independent sovereign state and changed its name to Zambia (Rapanyane and Shai, 2020; Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021). It is maintained that the surge in the copper price, incorporated with domestication of the copper royalties, is affirmed to have boosted Zambia to number one in the GDP growth tables in 1965 (Scott, 2019, p.166). The period starting from 1991 is stated to have changed Zambia's political as well as economic system, and also had an impact on how China relations ensued (Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021). According to Scott (2019, p.168) at independence, Zambia had more money than it knew what to do with it. Present-day, Zambia is home to the world's highest-grade deposits of copper which also contributes 70 percent to Zambia's foreign export earnings (Wexler and Bariyo, 2021; Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021; Scott, 2019, p.166; IMF, 2019).

The falling copper prices and increasing taxation by the Zambian government put pressure on the mining companies, and Zambia's assets, mostly held by private companies, subsequently formed a preferred collateral for Chinese lenders in the year 2010 (Gort and Brooks, 2023, p.831). Fast forward, and following the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, the Zambian economy is reported to have shrunk as the demand for copper was dented by the worldwide downturn. The Zambian kwacha is alleged to have lost a third of its value and consequently, Zambia was unable to meet the demands of multiple creditors (Gort and Brooks, 2023, p.831). In 2021, Zambia became the first country to default on its external debt in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. Zambia opted to bow out of a 42.5 million Eurobond repayment, making it the first African country to default on its debt (Africa News, 2020; Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021). The Zambian Finance Minister at the time Bwalya Ng'andu is claimed to have borne witness to the intentness of the morass in the aftermath of the default and stated that “If I pay Eurobonds, the moment I pay, the other creditors are going to put a dynamite under my legs and blow off my legs” (Gort and Brooks, 2023, p.831). The precedent of unprecedented lending in Zambia in accordance with Gort and Brooks (2023, p.831) is said to have been born through the World Bank and created a normative and financial frame that posits economic prosperity as only being facilitated through further lending (Gort and Brooks, 2023, p.838). Correspondingly, in the 1990s following years of economic mismanagement, and a drop in commodity prices, Zambia went into economic collapse, and had to rely on IMF loans. Today Zambia’s profile of creditors has shifted from West to East (Scott, 2019, p.116; IMF, 2019).

This decline in copper prices in Zambia also led to Glencore, a Swiss owned mining company, selling its stake in the Mopani Copper Mines to a state-controlled investment body. This also marked an indirect favorable avenue for Chinese financial flows to actualize, however, as the Mopani Copper Mines were by a state-owned mining company which took on 1.5 billion US dollar in debt from the Chinese lenders (Wexler and Bariyo, 2021; Gort and Brooks, 2023, p.841). With such influence, Chinese companies in Zambia were poised to take over this and other state-owned mines in the face of defaults (Gort and Brooks, 2023, p.842). According to Gort and Brooks (2023, p.842) extending loans under such precarious conditions has been, from a Chinese perspective, a productive endeavor, a low-risk (indirect) investment opportunity where the social and environmental costs are borne by Zambia (Gort and Brooks, 2023, p.842).

2.5 Aid flows in recent decades

The vision for Zambia for being a successful middle-income country (MIC) by 2030 is underpinned by: economic growth and wealth creation, social investment, and human development; creating and enabling an environment for sustainable social economic development (CUTS International Lusaka, 2019). Foreign development assistance to Zambia is divided between grants and loans. Hence, assistance in the form of grants has become progressively crucial as Zambia’s debt has increased. Most bilateral donors now assist Zambia with grants, while multilateral donors have a substantial element of loans (Matambo et al., 2021; The World Bank, 2017). During the years, Zambia’s primary lending sources have been the Eurobond market and Chinese creditors, although Zambia is maintained to also have borrowed from other non-traditional and commercial sources. It is claimed that most loans in the 1980s and 90s, and even up to 2011, were provided by multilateral banks such as the World Bank/IDA (International Development Association) and the African Development Bank (AFDB), and other development donors on concessional (low interest) terms (Ofstad and Tjønneland, 2019; Matambo et al., 2021; The World Bank, 2017).

The structural adjustment reforms that were prescribed to the developing world by Bretton Woods institutions did not bear the fruit that they were ideally supposed to. Zambia, in particular, had to contend with an increasingly restive citizenry, after experimenting with structural adjustments by removing subsidies from primary commodities (Gort and Brooks, 2023, p.841; Scott, 2019, p.75). The transition from SAPs was needed for Zambia due to the fact that the principles of SAPs and its implementation, at the very beginning emphasized stabilization and macroeconomic balance without taking into consideration the human condition, mainly of the poor. SAP was inadequate to address the issue of widespread poverty that characterized not only Zambia, but also most of the developing world, especially countries of sub-Saharan Africa (Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021). The structural adjustment programs left Zambia exposed and vulnerable to the challenges associated with the import liberalization, on the other hand, and strengthened US imperialism, and global capitalism on the other (Scott, 2019, p. 116-117). According to Gort and Brooks (2023, p.841), Zambia borrowing from China signals a clear departure from the neoliberal and globalized models promoted by the West.

2.6 The discourse on Zambia-China relations

During the course of 2001, anti-Chinese sentiment in Zambia was well documented. The case of Zambians against the Chinese is believed to have come against the backdrop of unemployment rates which were between 12-18 percent (Macrotrends, 2023) so that there was to a large extent, bleak forecast of the future for the Zambian youth. Successful Chinese businesses were asserted to have been constructed as objects of limiting the space for working-age Zambians (Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021; Scott, 2019, p.185). The Patriotic Front (PF), Zambia's ruling party from 2011 to 2021, is credited with bringing the China-Zambia relationship to the center of Zambia's political debate (Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021; Scott, 2019, p.185). Henceforth, the PF under the leadership of Michael Sata "King Cobra" is known to have successfully adopted a populist strategy (Masaki, 2018) by launching broadsides at the ruling Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) party, and is infamous for how it allowed Chinese nationals and the Chinese government to usurp Zambia's economy, and such, threatening its sovereignty (Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021).

These broadsides were perhaps not as inconspicuous as former times, from 2001 to 2008 so that as a regression, and perhaps after pressure unbeknownst to the masses, Sata in a near-half circle turn, reduced his emphasis on anti-Chinese sentiment. However, after the PF's accession to power in 2011, economic relations between China and Zambia grew, and so did anti-Chinese sentiment, only that this time it was coming from opposition political parties, the labor force, and ordinary Zambians who are stern critics of China-Zambia relations (Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021). Despite almost retracting from his campaign pledges, it is reported that former Zambian president Michael Sata, argued that China's incursions into Zambia, had a scent of colonialism about them. A sample of the paradoxes from the Sata administration in regard to the relationship with China, were as blunt as they were untenable, on account of Sata not actioning them as expected, and or, as promised. "We want" the Chinese to leave and the old colonial rulers to return, were his chants that he would later abandon. "They exploited our natural resources too, but at least they took good care of us" (Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021).

According to Scott (2019, p.185) former Zambian president Michael Sata's anti-Chinese campaign gained wide support as a result of incidents where fifty Zambians were blown to pieces in an explosion at a factory operated by Chambeshi Mines in the Copperbelt in 2004. It was reported by the employees of the company, the locals, that the Chinese management team at Beijing General Research Institute of Mining and Metallurgy (BGRIMM) had seen the temperature rise as the wrong ingredients were allowed to mix, so that, without giving warning to others, ran away for their own safety at the cost of the lives of the locals involved. The Chinese image was not helped when one official marveled about the fuss over "only" fifty people (Scott, 2019, p.185). In 2006, riots erupted at the Chambishi mines where Zambian workers protested about the mining explosion that killed 50 workers. Instead of recognizing Zambian demands for improved safety measures and healthcare, Chinese managers shot six Zambian protestors. Fast forward, and after coming into power in 2011, the PF government led by Sata retained and increased Chinese involvement in Zambia. This hints at a sense of resignation (Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021).

Contemporary, the scale of Chinese loans is highly variegated across African countries and predominates in favor of China, in certain key economies. Alongside Angola, the countries of Djibouti, the Republic of the Congo, and Zambia, are said to receive the majority of Chinese loans (Wexler and Bariyo, 2021; Gort and Brooks, 2023, p.839). It is stated that the Zambian government has not exactly said how much it owes to Chinese lenders as a whole. According to the John Hopkins University's China-Africa Research Initiative, estimates, Zambia is said to have signed some 9.9 billion US dollar in loans from China (Gort and Brooks, 2023, p.839; Zajontz,2022). The public external debt owed by the Zambian government to Chinese creditors was reportedly around 6.6 billion US dollar as of August 2021 (Brautigam; 2022; Wang et al., 2014), which is claimed to be much higher than the official World Bank (2020) data. Elsewhere, Lusaka's debt to Beijing was reported as 10.1 billion US dollar in 2020 across 78 loans (Gort and Brooks, 2023, p.839).

3. Theoretical perspective

This section will serve as a foundational review of existing theories as well as a roadmap for developing the arguments presented in this paper. This study is based on dependency theory, the theoretical perspective is essential in the study for the reason that it will provide me as the researcher the tools to consider limitations and alternative theories that challenge my perspective. Dependency theory is essential for the study as it addresses the significance of the global economic system in shaping a country's economic development, in this case Zambia. The theory also highlights how poor countries must break free of their dependence on wealthier ones in order to achieve growth. The theory will help interpret the data and inherently, propose explanations of the underlying causes and impacts related to that of foreign aid and development in Zambia. The study will also examine the factors which constitute foreign aid in order to analyze the research questions at hand.

3.1 Dependency theory

Dependency theory is considered to have been most influential in discrediting some Western ideas with reference to development in the developing world, particularly to policies and ideas that failed to appreciate the specific development needs of the developing world (Agebebi and

Virtanen, 2017). As a consequence, this shaped some controversies in development studies today, raising an awareness of the need to look into the patterns of economic development particular to “Third World” countries (Agebebi and Virtanen, 2017). The dependency theory was first proposed in the late 1950s by the Argentine economist Raúl Prebisch. The theory later gained prominence in the 1960s subsequent to World War II as scholars searched for the major cause in the lack of development in Latin America (Agebebi and Virtanen, 2017) although the theory was later extended to cover Africa and the Caribbean (O’Brien and Williams, 2016, p.223).

The theory surfaced in retaliation owing to a large number of theorists questioning the market-oriented theories of global inequality (Giddens and Sutton, 2014, p.387). Conspicuously, the theorists contended that lack of development was not quite the outcome of poverty and the absence of modern values but was in lieu the direct ramification of economic exploitation (O’Brien and Williams, 2016, p.223). Hence, the theory set off to become a vital tool to analyze development and underdevelopment in the international political economy (Agebebi and Virtanen, 2017). A great number of these dependency theorists were sociologists and economists from low-income countries of Latin-America and Africa. By employing the ideas of Karl Marx, they rejected the idea that the economic underdevelopment that plagued their home countries was a result of those countries’ own cultural or institutional shortcomings (Giddens and Sutton, 2014, p.386). Contemporaneously there is no single unified theory of dependency. Regardless of the disagreements among the dependency theorists, it is maintained that there still remains some basic agreements among them (Agebebi and Virtanen, 2017).

Dependency is characterized as the economic development of a state whose national development policies rely on external influences (Kabonga, 2017). A Marxist analysis of the dependency theory established in the works of Immanuel Wallerstein argues that the modern world system also labeled as the Capitalist World economy has resulted in divisions of the world into three, the “core, periphery and semi-periphery” (Agebebi and Virtanen, 2017). The core states are rich and industrialized states in the OECD. The periphery states are countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia (Kabonga, 2017). These regions are said to have created a new international division of labor where the politically, economically, and powerful states at the core attained their stature at the cost of the states at the periphery (Agebebi and Virtanen, 2017). Wallerstein's argument is that dependency can be overcome only through revolutionary socialism within a unified world system. On the contrary, Giddens and Sutton (2014, p.386) claim that even though colonialism gradually ended in most parts of the world in the decades after World War II, this did not mean the end of exploitation.

The Marxist view of dependency is said to have some historical validity. Developments in Asia advocate that North-South economic engagement can lead to positive outcomes in terms of economic and social development, as evidenced in newly industrialized countries of South Korea, Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia (Agebebi and Virtanen, 2017). Botswana in the 1960s, Indonesia in the late 1970s, Bolivia and Ghana in the 1980s, Uganda and Vietnam in the 1990s are all role models of countries that have gone from crisis to rapid development (Moyo, 2009b; The World Bank, 1998). Still and all, colonial past, political associations and alliances are said to be major determinants of foreign aid. As a consequence, countries that democratize are said to receive more aid, ceteris paribus (Alesina and Dollar, 2000). Alesina and Dollar (2000) found substantial proof that the direction of foreign aid was imposed as much by political and strategic considerations, as by economic needs and policy performance of their recipients.

The dependency theory further highlights that the development of some countries has resulted in the underdevelopment of others. Current advanced industrial societies only achieved this status through the expropriation of economic surplus from the currently underdeveloped societies (O'Brien and Williams, 2016, p.223). Over and above that, global capitalism, in their view, has led to low-income countries being trapped in a downward spiral of exploitation and poverty (Giddens, 2014, p.386-387). Poor countries are thus forced to borrow money and therefore end up in debt to the rich countries, which strengthens their economic dependence. Low-income countries are therefore considered maldeveloped rather than developed (Giddens and Sutton, 2014, p. 387; Collier, 2007, p.10). Non-Marxist theorists such as Haq (1976) claim that a shared interest in North-South cooperation is the basis for mutual cooperation, a point where he differs from the other dependency theorists with Marxist views (Agebebi and Virtanen, 2017).

The rapid industrialization of the North as well as the export competitiveness according to Prebish (1968) created a divide between the global North and South, resulting in declining terms of trade for the South and eventually dependency of the South on the North (Agebebi and Virtanen, 2017). As a solution to this, Prebish suggested that "Third World" countries accelerate industrialization by adopting import substitution. Haq and Prebisch share similar perspectives that detach them from the Marxist school of dependency theorists. On account of the perceived shared interests between the North and South, they argue that the North is required to initiate system reforms to safeguard its own interests (Agebebi and Virtanen, 2017). The two theorists Haq and Prebisch consider the idea of the existence of shared North- South interest as unrealistic considering the incapability of the South to modify the system (Agebebi and Virtanen, 2017).

3.2 Criticism of the dependency theory

One of the main obstacles of using dependency theory as an overall encompassing premise, however, is that it may lead to generalizations without considering the specific histories and developments of individual countries; it fails to account for the endogenous factors involved in a country's development and attributes blame entirely on external factors (Agebebi and Virtanen, 2017). More criticism of the theory is that ex-colonies have actually profited from colonialism and that the basis of their underdevelopment was from internal causes. Although the theory was regarded as a great contribution to the study of international political economy. It was argued that there was no unified theory of dependency thus criticism came from both the left and the right. The relationship between underdevelopment was clarified in a circular manner (Namkoong, 1999). Thus, one has to be careful and assure to use a wide range of source material as to broaden the perspective, along foreign aid, to better relate the research topic at hand to the development of Zambia.

3.3 Relevance of dependency theory today

This section, albeit brief, discusses the relevance of the dependency theory today. According to Kvangraven (2021) the core hypothesis of the dependency theory research programme remains pertinent today given the persistence of a highly uneven distribution of types of production across the world, along with overall rising global inequality. It is maintained that dependency thoughts haven't lost their relevance yet. Kvangraven (2021) claims that dependency theory is still useful in analyzing recurring financial crises. Despite the marginalization of the dependency theory since the 1980s, the theory is said to still hold important contemporary relevance for a renewal of development studies (Kvangraven, 2021).

Kvangraven (2021) suggests that elements of dependency theory have shown up in a variety of guises, at different times and in different regions and can be seen as a testament to the relevance of concepts related to dependency theory beyond discussions of Marxism or Latin America (Kvangraven, 2021). China for example, has made significant advances in terms of upgrading, although it has massively expanded its manufacturing exports based on its integration into global production networks, its expansion has involved strong dependence on FDI, rapid denationalization of the export-oriented manufacturing sector and relatively low levels of domestic innovation incorporated into exports. It is claimed that the development of China can be fruitfully understood through the lens of peripherality (Kvangraven, 2021).

An illustration of Chinese investments in African infrastructure projects is that of a major seaport in Kenya. Concerns have been raised that a lack of reliable infrastructure to the new port will make the payoff small. Another concern is that employment prospects may be sleek for the local residents. The point is that it is vital that the local community takes part in the gains from the port (Bachmann and Musembi, 2021). China has a large footprint in several African countries. Their investments, predominantly in megaprojects, have soared in recent decades. Investments in infrastructure can have negative impacts on the local communities where these projects take place. Governments may become dependent on, for instance China, for investments in developing the country. But it is important for these projects to be aligned with the concerns of the residents of the country, or the government risks animosity of its populace. This shows that development, for the sake of economic growth, might look great on paper, but that it might have negative effects on the people where the projects take place, such as on local wildlife and the labor market (Aalders et al., 2021). The proposed examples above demonstrate how China is creating dependency among developing countries. In my analysis I will examine this sort of dependency between China and Zambia, with a particular focus on the debt-trap. This is crucial to examine, since the government budget of Zambia has become more reliant on external financing; this has developed to a point where Zambia has become one of the most aid-dependent countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Ofstad and Tjønneland, 2019).

I argue that the dependency theory is relevant in explaining economic and power relations between Zambia and China. The indication of the unequal and exploitative relationships between Zambia and China can be seen in many spheres, including economic, political and culture. Usually, the terms for the aid and or loans that form the policy, are penned by China, and inherently do very little in terms of paving a way for liberation of Zambia from the dependency bondage created. To understand how and perhaps why situations such as the one

Zambia and China find themselves, this paper focuses on the role of foreign aid and loans given by China in continuing the dependence of Zambia. Besides increasing the debt profile of Zambia, the conditions attached to foreign aid by China are damaging to the Zambian economy as it limits the decision-making capability of aid in Zambia.

4. Research design and method

In this section, the method of the paper, albeit brief, presents materials and sources for the research study. This section describes the steps taken to investigate the research problem and rationale for the application of the procedures used to identify, select and analyze the selection of the articles as well as the method process, thereby allowing the reader to critically evaluate the study's overall validity and reliability.

4.1 Choice of method

In this paper I have chosen to explore the dynamic interlinkages between foreign aid and loans on the one hand and economic and human development on the other in Zambia during the period of 2010-2020. To do so I have chosen thematic analysis which will be used to answer the research questions. The scientific approach used in the study is a qualitative approach. Relevant policy documents, articles, Zambia news reporting, government documents, and aid statistics, that study foreign aid in Zambia will be used as source material, and these will be coded in line with a thematic analysis study. This approach will utilize a wide source of data to help spread light on whether foreign aid has a positive or negative impact on development in Zambia. I chose this method insofar as the chosen method will provide a more in-depth insight on foreign aid. The method will provide a better understanding in addition to going deeper into issues of interest and exploring nuances related to the problem at hand.

The research design that will be used in the study is a single case study, to explore the dynamic interlinkages between foreign aid and economic and human development in Zambia. In the spirit of a single case study the method I choose to apply is thematic analysis, which will be used to code and study my data, and thus help to provide answers to my posed research questions. Since by coding and comparing previous literature, I am able to get a wider perspective of the subject research question. Thematic analysis is one of the most common approaches when analyzing qualitative data. The thematic analysis entails different stages, such as, becoming familiar with the data, coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes and write-up (Bryman, 2018, p.707). The downside of thematic analysis is that it is time consuming and that the chosen coding might give rise to various interpretations open for debate. It is thus important to remain true to the steps of the process of coding and to be consistent (Bryman, 2018, p.716).

The thematic analysis is chosen for the reason that it offers a greater description of method and also aligns with the intended scope of the research and its objectives, as well as the norms of the specific research area. The method will bring forth a more in-depth insight on foreign aid to Zambia, as well as contribute to a better understanding into going deeper into issues of interest by exploring nuances related to the problem at hand. New knowledge brought forward from this study could include synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it leads to new and creative outcomes as well as unexpected issues of the dynamic interlinkages between foreign aid on the other hand and economic and human development in Zambia, which can help answer my research questions. Unlike content analysis, which focuses on the systematic classification of data using coding to recognize the main categories problems within it (Bryman 2012, p.359), the thematic analysis focuses on the search and generation of themes from the dataset (Bryman 2018, p.703). The differences between the two are slight as both are interested in the collection of themes from data.

4.2 Research design

The thematic analysis in this thesis will be based on the chosen theoretical perspective, using relevant policy documents, articles, Zambia news reporting, government documents, and aid statistics, and analyze critical segments of published body of knowledge through summary, classification, and comparison of previous research studies as a source for coding. The coded material will then be analyzed based on a thematic analysis. Manual coding will be used to read through the data and develop and assign codes and themes, and thematic analysis is the tool that I use to interpret the retrieved codes and materials. The material that I use in this study deals with the dynamic interlinkages between foreign aid and loans and economic and human development in Zambia.

4.3 Material and data analysis

I conducted the thematic analysis in different phases, beginning with sorting out the source material, ending with interpreting the collected data. I begin by familiarizing myself with the data. The chosen area of interest is to explore the dynamic interlinkages between foreign aid and economic and human development in Zambia. I start by locating potentially relevant studies by doing a systematic search on the University library databases (PRIMO database and ProQuest) to get an idea of my keywords/phrases and to also see if the sources are relevant to my purpose or aim. I do a systematic search of academic secondary literature such as articles, aid statistics, books, reviews of literature, and analyze critical segments of published body of knowledge through summary, classification, and comparison of previous research studies.

The next phase involves the coding process in which I manually coded data. I was able to do this because my source material is not as extensive. This phase involved looking at the texts and organizing them in codes; these codes amount to a list of important concepts, ideas, metaphors, phrases, as well as their relationship to one another. In thematic analyses, data is organized or structured based on themes; these themes can alternatively be determined in advance (deductive) or developed based on the collected material (inductive) (Langemar, 2008, p.127-128). In the thematic analysis, both a deductive and an inductive approach was used, as this can be a way of increasing the validity of the analysis. This is for the reason that if one has prior knowledge of the subject, this prior knowledge can involuntarily influence the inductive thematization and prevent one from seeing new aspects or features in the data. If you instead focus this pre-understanding on certain predetermined themes, it is easier to then put these aside and instead focus on and discover new findings in the data. If you only start from a deductive thematic analysis, you can be too guided by your themes, which can lead to the interpretations being too far-fetched (Langemar, 2008, p.130-132). According to Bryman (2018, p.705) it is vital that these themes are relevant to the research questions or the focus of the purpose. Bryman (2018, p.706) further writes that one should be careful in applying thematic analysis as justification for the identification and development of themes is often vague. It is therefore important not only to write which themes are significant (Bryman, 2018, p.705).

I began organizing my data in a systematic way. I was concerned with addressing the specific research questions and analyzing the data with this in mind. One of the limitations encountered during searching for sources, is that I was unable to find official debt statistics on China, owing to the fact that China does not publish records of its foreign loans. I later backed it up by doing a systematic search in the Zambian media, Zambian government discourse and relevant policy documents on literature on China and Zambia in particular.

My search strategy included a combination of three words/phrases: Zambia, foreign aid and development. Why I choose to use these keywords/search phrases is owing to the fact that they are central words in my aim and research questions. I made a limitation in the search filter by choosing peer-reviewed journals and articles in English. The search resulted in over 1002 articles**.** By searching using the chosen keywords/phrases, the results of the searches yielded relevant articles for the research. I also examine whether the sources are focused and informative. Another aspect which was important during the search was to check whether the articles met the intentions and purpose of my research. I read the headlines of the first 300 articles, there were 100 that I considered relevant. I then read the summary and abstract to these articles.

As a result, I downloaded 16 academic secondary articles covering Zambia and China that I read in depth which I considered to be interesting and relevant for my aim. Purposive sampling was used for choosing my articles. Bryman (2018, p.498) claims that most sampling in qualitative research involves goal directed or goal-oriented sampling of some kind, and that selection is made based on the goals of the research. A systematic search was also done using Zambian media websites such as the Lusaka Times in order to access Zambian media discourse on foreign aid on Zambia and China, and some were accessed from the PressReader Database which is a source of data on the newspaper industry worldwide. This resulted in a selection of 7 Zambian newspaper articles. 7 Zambian government policy documents were accessed from the Zambian Ministry of foreign affairs official website. Which included an analysis of speeches from the Zambian parliament. A book by former Zambian Vice President and President of Zambia Guy Scott "Adventures in Zambian Politics: A Story in Black and White" (2019), was used. The book gives an account of the Zambian political and economic developments from independence to today and covers the issue of Chinese dependence. An analysis of the Chinese government documents such as the Chinese white papers, which included 6 academic secondary articles. These gave an additional overview on how the Zambian and Chinese discourse on investment, debt, and how aid looks like today.

The bulk of my collected material consists of secondary sources (existing literature) coupled with some primary data. Having access to further primary material would strengthen the analysis of my thesis, but working with existing literature, albeit from a different perspective, can provide new insights. Reading the chosen sources through the glasses of dependency theory generates new views; views that can help me answer the research questions.

Using repeated reading I was able to familiarize myself with key concepts, themes and metaphors used in the literature. Any patterns or themes were noted down in my transcripts. Something that was recurring in several of the articles, such as Brautigam (2022) and Rapanyane (2021) was the "debt-trap" and "BRI" which I considered relevant to my research questions. The predetermined themes that were used in the analyses were "Chinese lending versus Western lending and foreign aid", "development", and "loans" as these were central words in the aim and the research questions. I coded every transcript by hand initially, working through copies of transcripts with pens and highlighters. Although in most cases analytical software Nvivo can also be useful with large datasets.

The next phase involved reviewing and searching for themes. I examined the codes and some of them clearly fitted together into a theme. Since I did this manually, I cut out codes and put them together. I coded all my themes properly and thoroughly. The next phase of the thematic analysis procedure involved reviewing the themes. I began by reviewing and defining my themes and ensuring that my themes matched my research questions. Finally, in the last phase of the thematic analysis, I interpret and study the themes with their corresponding codes to determine if there are any overarching themes or theories that provide insight on foreign aid to Zambia, which will allow me to answer my research questions. The three major themes listed above are overarching themes that are generated from the narratives in my source material. I use these three themes as a foundation for my discussion and analysis.

According to Bryman (2018, p.692-693) categories should reflect the themes that have become apparent and represent the major findings of the source material. For this study, the codes were compiled into three major categories, or themes: Chinese lending versus western lending and foreign aid, development (encompassing both economic and human development), and Chinese loans (with a focus on the debt-trap). I choose these three categories, or themes as I will also refer to them as, they are recurring content in the source material I have gathered, and that they connect to the purpose of this thesis. This is an important aspect of a thematic analysis, as the chosen classification of the codes will help me to answer my research questions. By sorting material into a few themes, I am able to carry out an analysis. In the next section I will present the results from my data collection, that is, the data for each major theme that constitutes the overall sample from my source material.

4.4 Ethical principles, considerations, reliability, and validity

In accordance with Bryman (2012, p.133) it is of importance to be aware of the ethical principles involved along with the nature of the concerns with reference to ethics in social research. Hence this study on foreign aid to Zambia, subjectiveness needs to be considered. Research according to Bryman (2012, p.187) should be designed, reviewed as well as undertaken to guarantee integrity, quality and transparency. The intended scope of my research and its objectives are aligned with the thematic analysis of the chosen material. It is worth bearing in mind that the selection of material given the connection to the subject at hand will be made by me as the researcher. The Swedish Research Council (2017, p.15-16) maintains that research requires to be carried out in an adequate manner scientifically and ethically. Hence, it is my obligation as a researcher to make certain that research is conducted in an ethical and responsible manner from beginning to end. I as the researcher must maintain reflexiveness about my own subjective position and being influenced during the research all through the research process (Suri, 2019, p.10). In an analysis such as this one I as the researcher need to devout a part to discuss my subjective position. Other ethical issues are of less relevance given that the study does not involve surveys, storage of sensitive data or interviews.

Reliability and validity are important criteria for assessing the quality of a quantitative oriented study. The two basic criteria for assessing a qualitative study are reliability and authenticity. The reliability criterion consists of four sub-criteria: credibility, transferability, reliability and an opportunity to strengthen and confirm. Having roots from Zambia it is important that I reflect on my feelings and interest towards the research subject. The study has also attempted to meet the transferability criterion which has been met by providing clear descriptions of the selection process of the source material as well as explaining the context of the study. Reliability has been achieved by providing a complete and accessible account of all the phases of the research process. This study pursues trustworthiness by accounting for the research questions, selection of material regarding the analysis of the data. This study aims to meet the reflexivity criterion by reflecting on the consequences of my choices as well as values during the course of this study (Bryman, 2018, p.467-468).

5. Results

This section presents the results obtained from the various findings in accordance with the chosen themes. The first section will examine Chinese lending versus Western lending and foreign aid, followed by development, and finally Chinese loans.

5.1 Chinese lending versus Western lending and foreign aid

There has been much discussion about the terms and conditions of Chinese overseas lending as compared to Western lending and foreign aid. This section reviews the findings gathered from my literature review on how official Chinese finance compares and contrasts with official Western finance. This is also to examine whether Chinese lending is beneficial to Zambian development.

The Chinese approach to tackling under-development in Africa was largely effective due to China's own comparative advantage in manufacturing and the compatibility of China's resource endowments, in particular abundant labor with African nations (Wang et al., 2014). Unlike their Western counterparts, the Chinese were willing to accept raw materials as a form of repayment on infrastructure loans "RFI" deals (Bagwandeen, 2022; Dunford, 2020; Mulakala and Ji, 2021; Zhang et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2018). China also issued more loans to poor countries at adjustable interest rates than Western governments or multilateral institutions (Cormier, 2022; Yuan et al., 2022, p.14), whereas in Zambia, China dictated the terms and conditions of loans (Rapanyane and Shai, 2020). In comparison to Western lending, the approach adopted by China eschewed conditionality and had been faced with criticism for its unconditionality in lending to poor countries (Wang et al., 2014; Singh, 2020; Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021; Carmody, 2009; Brautigam, 2022). At the same time, China's approach had also been criticized for its failure to create direct employment and that China's unconditionally hampered good governance in Africa (Wang et al., 2014; Mwiinga and Willima, 2019). China's noninterference policy and the inability to call African dictators to order and entrench human rights, allowed a situation in which African leaders and oppressive regimes utilized the means given to them by China to enrich themselves and become more powerful "quashing" any opposition and fueling corruption (Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021; Wang et al., 2014; Cormier, 2022; Yuan et al., 2022, p.36).

On the other hand, the Chinese provided less-mineral rich African countries with aid and conditional loans as a virtue to condemn any possible global criticism (Rapanyane, 2021). Conditionality was one of China's guiding principles of South-South cooperation and framework for China's foreign aid (Wang et al., 2014; Yuan et al., 2022, p.38; Mwiinga and Willima, 2019). China also had a more explicit focus on mutual benefit (win-win) and the interests of Beijing and prioritization of opportunities for Chinese business (Gort and Brooks, 2023, p.840; Zhang et al., 2022; Mulakala and Ji, 2021; Yang et al., 2018; Dunford, 2020; State Council Information Office, 2021, p.11). Chinese loans were extended through national agencies, obscured through government-to government negotiation, and spent on Chinese private contractors (Nkonde, 2020; Zambian Business Times, 2017). Correspondingly, the main principles of China's aid policy were, non-interference in other countries' domestic affairs, multiple forms of lending, government guidance, budget planning and implementation of projects, as well as provision of finance without political strings attached (Yuan et al., 2022, p.40). In contrast to Western lending, Chinese aid emphasized infrastructure, something many poor countries need and want but often found traditional Western aid donors reluctant to fund (Wang et al., 2014; Mwiinga and Willima, 2019; Zhang et al., 2022; Mulakala and Ji, 2021; Yang et al., 2018; Dunford, 2020; Lusaka Times, 2019).

The Chinese aid system was characterized by ongoing competition for influence among actors especially MOFCOM, China Ministry of Commerce, and MOF, the ministry of finance, and companies responsible for implementing Chinese projects (Zhang and Smith, 2017; Zambian Business Times, 2017). MOFCOM was the final decision-maker on Chinese foreign policy and aid. While MOF influenced aid as the caretaker of Chinese foreign policy (Yuan et al., 2022, p.28; Zhang et al., 2022; Zhang and Smith, 2017). Due to their close relations with local politicians, China's firms can access information on recipient countries' demands for aid projects. They often shaped that demand into projects that were larger than the country needs (Wang et al., 2014; Zambian Business Times, 2017). There was also a robust interdependence between China's foreign policy objectives and the amount of aid that it gave to Africa and global countries (Rapanyane, 2021). Most African countries had often endorsed the foreign policy pursuits of China on several global, multilateral occasions including their endorsement of the Asian tiger (Rapanyane, 2021; Lusaka Times, 2022; Lusaka Times, 2019).

China's 2021 white paper altogether avoids terms such as "donor" to describe its own role, and uses the term "development cooperation," rather than foreign aid in the title (Yuan et al., 2022, p.13; Carmody et al., 2022; Mulakala and Ji, 2021; State Council Information Office, 2021, p.2). The OECD development assistance committee differentiates between ODA, and other official flows “OOF”. ODA pertains to development-motivated loans that are concessional in nature and carry a grant aspect of at least 25 percent “calculated at a rate of discount of 10 percent” (Yuan et al., 2022, p.14; Carmody et al., 2022). OOF pertains to official sector transactions that do not meet ODA criteria and with the main purpose to facilitate export (Yuan et al., 2022, p.14). As opposed to Western creditors, Chinese lending activities were purposely less transparent. The Chinese government did not publish any comparable documentation pertaining to its lending programs (Cormier, 2022, Yuan et al., 2022, p.36; Mwiinga and Willima, 2019). The official data on Chinese loans were not publicly available and all circulated statistics were approximations. Henceforth, Beijing was also not a member of the OECD and did not part-take in the organization’s creditor reporting system (Carmody et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2022; Yuan et al., 2022, p.36). In contrast to Western creditors, China was not a member of the Paris Club and did not follow the “Paris Accords" conditionalities. China also included military assistance and construction of sports facilities as foreign aid which is excluded from the official development assistance (Carmody et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2022; Mulakala and Ji, 2021; Yang et al., 2018).

Over and above that, the Chinese state in Zambia exercised authority through mechanisms such as debt relief, investment, combined with warnings to take these away as happened before the 2006 presidential election when the Chinese ambassador threatened to break diplomatic and economic relations if “anti-Chinese” populist president Michael Sata was elected in Zambia (Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021; Scott, 2019, p.185). Moreover, through the World Bank and the IMF Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), African countries were forced to open their economies to Western penetration and increase exports of primary goods to wealthy nations which multiplied profits for Western multinational corporations while subjecting “Third World” countries to levels of poverty and economic decline (Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021; Scott, 2019, p.116).

5.2 Development

This section of the results examines the ways Chinese investment through Chinese mega projects (BRI) contributes to economic and human development. The findings are associated with how the Chinese government is claimed to leverage the debt burden of smaller countries for geopolitical ends.

Based on the statistical findings in section 2.2 of growth rates in Zambia, it was shown that, with high levels of government spending going towards debt servicing, less money was left to improve the quality of public services in Zambia. The government of Zambia was struggling to fund key budgeted activities owing to the need to redirect resources to debt repayment. Growth in 2022 was seen to be sluggish, fiscal deficits had been persistently high and debt was unsustainable. Government intends to finance via domestic debt and concessional loans, which may have a negative effect on economic growth (CUTS International Lusaka, 2019; Zambian parliament, 2023a; Zambian parliament, 2023b; Zambian parliament, 2023c; Parliamentary Budget Office, 2023). Higher taxes threaten to increase the cost of living for individuals, push low-income earners into poverty, and also slow down economic growth. The first step on the road to recovery was to be more transparent on the exact amount of Zambia’s debt, its broad structure, creditors, and interest terms, and delivering the promised quarterly debt status reports and publishing the recently conducted Debt Sustainability Analysis (DSA) (Brautigam, 2022; CUTS International Lusaka, 2019; Zambian parliament, 2023a). The slowdown in growth and the national indebtedness had hit most people through depreciation of the Kwacha, rising inflation and poor funding for essential services (Zambian parliament, 2023a; Bank of Zambia, 2022).

Growth rate in Zambia was seen to have been too low to reduce rates of poverty, inequality, and malnutrition (Zambian parliament, 2023a; Zambian parliament 2023b; Parliamentary Budget Office, 2023). GDP per capita has increased, but the poverty rate has remained unchanged between the years 2010 and 2020, as argued in section 2.2. The numbers show an associated correlation, but one should be cautious to interpret it as a causal relationship. The HDI growth has stagnated in recent years, as depicted in figure 3, meaning that life expectancy and education are decreasing, or at least no longer improving. All in all, the gains provided by the influx of aid and loans seem to have resulted in increasing debt, stagnant poverty in terms of shares but increasing poverty in terms of number of people, as the populace has grown during the years of interest, stagnating HDI, despite economic growth. This implies that economic growth has favored the few at the expense of the many.

The Chinese government has had a more developed geo-economic strategy in Zambia offering potential for enhanced development outcomes. The recent growth of the Zambian economy is based on natural resource exports, trading, construction, and agriculture. It conforms to a pattern of enclave-led growth (Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021). To stimulate growth, the Zambian Government intends to spend K35 billion on Economic Affairs. It is expected that economic growth will simultaneously be stimulated by the tax concessions offered to both citizens and businesses. Expenditures towards external debt repayments are expected to reduce from 51.3 Kwacha in 2022 to 18.3 billion Kwacha in 2023. These resources have been redirected towards productive investment and social capital i.e., Education and Health. Notwithstanding, the proposed budget deficit of 7.7 % of GDP which the Government intends to finance via domestic debt and concessional loans, may have a negative effect on economic growth (Zambian parliament, 2023a, Zambian parliament 2023b; Zambian parliament, 2023c; Parliamentary Budget Office, 2023; Bank of Zambia, 2022).

In 2020, Zambia borrowed heavily to fund infrastructure with the highest per capita Chinese debts in Africa that were in surplus of 10.1 billion US dollar in 2020, thus far, these modernization projects had failed to deliver sustainable growth (Gort and Brooks, 2023, p.839; Zajontz, 2022). The proposed Zambian 2023 budget amounting to 167.3 billion Kwacha was 3 % smaller than the 2022 budget in absolute terms. As a percentage of GDP, the 2023 budget had been reduced to 31.4 % from 37.1 % in 2022. The allocation towards General Public Services had been reduced by 23 % due to reduced external debt servicing from 51 billion Kwacha in 2022 to 18 billion Kwacha in 2023. This is on the backdrop of Zambia securing an extended credit facility with the IMF and debt restructuring efforts. Resources had been redirected towards social protection, health, and education (Parliamentary Budget Office, 2023; Bank of Zambia, 2022).

The lack of infrastructure continues to be an obstacle to growth and development in many low-income countries where trade and transport costs are the highest in the world and can act as a significant constraint on trade expansion (Wang et al., 2014; Lusaka Times, 2022; Zambian Business Times, 2017). The lack of physical infrastructure had been one of the main reasons why economic growth had been so slow in much of Africa (Nkonde, 2020; Wang et al., 2014). Despite Zambia being endowed with vast mineral resources, the country had not realized maximum benefits from the sector’s potential to support growth and enhance socio-economic development (Nkonde, 2020). In spite of showing a positive picture, the mining industry had not stimulated corresponding growth in other sectors. Zambia did not have Zambians who owned mines or had equity or financial interests in mining companies (Rapanyane, 2021; Nkonde, 2020).

Sub-Saharan African countries were engaged with China for equal mutual benefit particularly in the context of BRI (Carmody et al., 2012; Rapanyane, 2021; Rapanyane and Shai, 2020; Bagwandeen 2022). Allegations had been made that China's real intention in Africa was to plunder its resources and practice neocolonialism because Chinese companies and agencies imported skilled and unskilled labor from China and that little employment was created for underemployed Africans (Wang et al., 2014; Lusaka Times, 2010; Yuan et al., 2022, p.39; Zambian Business Times, 2017; Rapanyane, 2021; Nkonde, 2020). Furthermore, Chinese companies came to Africa to exploit African mineral resources whilst using their Chinese workers at the expense of Africans who were really in need of jobs (Rapanyane, 2021; Lusaka Times, 2015; Lusaka Times, 2010). Moreso, the money from Chinese loans did not come to Zambia but remained in China to purchase materials and machinery (Rapanyane, 2021; Nkonde, 2020; Lusaka Times, 2010).

Trade and finance were the only growth point of China's financial commitment to Africa. China in recent years had provided "gargantuan" loans for mega-BRI infrastructure projects on the continent that if implemented successfully, could boost Africa's economic development (Bagwandeen, 2022). On the other hand, unlike the failures of the Western and European economic superpowers in Africa. China and its economic and development approach provided an alternative to Africa's aspiration for socio-economic growth and development (Singh, 2020; Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021; Carmody, 2009; Zajontz, 2022; Bagwandeen, 2022; Brautigam, 2022; Mwiinga and Willima, 2019). Furthermore, the World Bank's emphasis on economic and financial sustainability contrasted with Chinese lenders' willingness to fund dubious commercial prospects, at least in the short term, but had the potential to simulate future growth (Brautigam, 2022; Mwiinga and Willima, 2019).

With respect to Chinese Investment, China's investment tends to favor a select group of African countries that tend to be natural resource exporters, whereas China mostly imports oil and other minerals from Africa (Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021). Simultaneously, Chinese investors in Africa put "government support" as the second most important reason for investing there (Rapanyane, 2021). The mega-BRI projects came with "hefty" price tags that contributed to debt stress of several African nations including Zambia. At the same time, the Chinese-sponsored road projects didn't always correspond to the road development priorities set out at working level within the Zambian ministries and road government agencies (Bagwandeen, 2022). The case study of Zambia's road sector had shown that Africa's infrastructure sector had become a prime outlet for Chinese loan-debt investment. The Chinese infrastructural fix in Africa resembled previous and ongoing Western-led modes of accumulation on the continent (Zajontz, 2020). Furthermore, the Chinese-sponsored road bonanza projects had consequently resulted in the implementation of road projects that were criticized for being driven by Chinese supply rather than by the Zambian demand (Zajontz, 2020; Zambian Business Times, 2017).

5.3 Chinese loans

In this section I examine whether China is burdening Zambia with unsustainable debt. The claim is that China lends money to other countries which it ends up taking control of key assets if the receiving countries cannot meet their debt.

More than 65 % of Chinese loans were used for infrastructure projects versus less than 13% of those from the OECD (Gort and Brooks, 2023, p.840). In relation to Chinese loans, borrowing countries committed future revenues from natural resource exports to pay loans secured from Chinese creditors (Gort and Brooks, 2023, p.840-841). With reference to debt sustainability, the Zambian leaders had neither adopted Chinese ideas about debt sustainability nor been influenced by China's development state model, unlike Ethiopia for example (Brautigam, 2022; Nkonde, 2020; Zambian Business Times, 2017). Corruption appeared to be extensive, and Chinese firms were involved. When interviewed in 2008, the then opposition leader Michael Sata alluded to corruption, saying that the Chinese 'invest heavily in the pockets of leaders (Brautigam, 2022; Lusaka Times, 2010). In Zambia, debt distress was a function of Zambian leaders' imprudent decision to accept offers of credit from multiple uncoordinated Chinese banks and companies, along with its several international bond issues. The past debt cancellations may have created a moral hazard and Zambian leaders may have over-borrowed in the belief that lenders would cancel unpaid debts (Brautigam, 2022; Zajontz, 2020).

With reference to the debt-trap, Chinese overseas lending had been branded as "dept-trap" diplomacy and politically instrumentalized by the Trump administration and other "hypocrites" in the West (Zajontz, 2022), although these rumors of debt-trap were not supported by evidence (Brautigam, 2022; Bagwandeen, 2022; Singh, 2020). In spite of China being an opaque lender, dept-trap and predatory lending arguments were weakened by the fact that it had demonstrated a willingness to engage in debt restructuring and cancellation with African countries over the years (Bagwandeen, 2022). Chinese national interests were secured by long-lasting loans offered through BRI's infrastructural development initiative which promotes debt-traps that make it difficult for the concerned countries to reimburse (Rapanyane and Shai, 2020; Lusaka Times, 2015; Lusaka Times, 2019; Yuan et al., 2022, p.38).

Relating to relevant recurring disagreement on the debt-trap, most literature on the other hand claimed otherwise. The debt-trap promoted by China in Africa was seen to be a representation or practice of recolonizing by economic neocolonialism, and re-imperializing Africa (Rapanyane, 2021). During 1990, China State Farm Agri-business Corporation made its first African investment in Zambia, buying the first of three farms it now owns in the country. Zambia was found to be a location of the second Chinese mining investment in Africa. In 1998 China Non-Ferrous Metals Mining Corporation (CNMC) purchased the Chambishi copper mine that was being privatized (Scott, 2019, p. 185). The CNMC has direct links to the Beijing government and now runs four copper mines in Zambia. The details of this case provide insight into the difficulties ahead as more countries slip into debt distress (Brautigam, 2022; Lusaka Times, 2018).

In Zambia there were serious worries and reports, including those presented by Africa Confidential, that China had already practically taken over the African country's economy. National Strategic assets including the businesses and physical assets such as the Zambian National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC), Lusaka International Airport and Zambia Electricity Supply Corporation (ZESCO) were understood to be collateralized when Zambia dwindled in repaying its debts (Lusaka Times, 2018). On the other hand, in Angola natural resources were used as collateral for loans. Angola was understood to owe the Asian Tiger roughly 60 billion US dollar (Eickhoff, 2022; Rapanyane, 2021). Despite having abundant oil reserves in the country, Angola was expected to be not struggling in repaying Chinese loans, as it would just sell its oil in the global market and repay the loans with extra proceeds. Moreover, the Chinese neo-colonial and imperial agenda of debt-trap diplomacy does not allow the African country to sell its oil in the open global market (Rapanyane, 2021). Instead, the oil reserves themselves were deployed to repay the government debt acquired over time. Angola, like Zambia, was short of clearness as the country's biggest earner was Chinese trapped (Rapanyane, 2021; Eickhoff, 2022).

In November 2018, Hakainde Hichilema, Zambia's current president who was at the time opposition party leader, allegedly asserted that China had overtaken the state-owned Zambia Forestry and Forestry Industries Corporation (ZAFFICO). Upon hearing this, riots broke out in the Copperbelt province of Zambia, amidst looting Chinese-owned businesses (Nkonde, 2020; Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021). In a similar way, in 2018, there were a groundswell of emotion in Zambia as rumors filtered through that China had commandeered the Zambian National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) and the Zambia Electricity Supply Corporation (ZESCO). China was also in the process of seizing Zambian airports because the Zambian government had failed to pay the debt it owed to China (Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021).

6. Analysis and discussion

In this section, the results of the study are analyzed and discussed. Furthermore, the results are compared with previous results in the research area. The theoretical perspective of dependency theory is used to partly strengthen and explain, but also to question the arguments provided by the literature. In this section the aim of the study and research questions are to be answered. I make use of the main arguments with the dependency theory, and the analysis and discussion are divided based on my three research questions.

6.1 How has foreign aid towards Zambia changed in the last decade?

Let us start by considering the fact that Chinese influence in Africa under Xi Jinping, with regards to foreign aid and infrastructure, has increased remarkably while Western influence on the other hand has decreased (Cormier, 2022; Wang et. al., 2014). By way of explanation, the basis of China's betterment is that it is making headway for Zambia and most African countries, owing to the reason that the principle of non-interference appears to be vital to Zambia and most African countries at most. In contrast to loans which are financed by the West, the Chinese are now providing more loans to fund development projects in sub-Saharan Africa and Zambia in particular (Cormier, 2022; Rapanyane, 2021).

Into the bargain, China being a vital economic development symbol for Zambia and Africa at large, has tendered favorable loans and investments without conditions which can also be depicted as a major departure from conventional Western aid loans and investment. From a historical point of view, one could see it this way that, since Africa is riddled with bad faith or betrayal by the West, from colonial rule to a series of predatory loans from Western financial institutions such as the IMF, and the World Bank, (SAPs) (Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021; Singh, 2020) that are stated to have drenched the African continent into debt. On that account, countries like Zambia may appear to prefer loans from China to steer clear of constricting neoliberal conditionality that goes with Western financial institutions.

One should nevertheless consider the issue from another angle. It is noteworthy that the West's criticism of China regarding the claims of Chinese engagement in Africa being worrisome, confuses the matter in question, and can be regarded as self-defeating, as China will still remain a crucial player in Zambia, and Africa in general. By the same token, it can also be seen as a rebuke on the Chinese political establishment, as the message lands flat with Africans, and Zambians, who strongly aspire greater trade and investment with China. An alternative illustrative from the literature (Rapanyane, 2021) shows that most African countries including Zambia, are sympathetic to the Beijing model of governance which focuses on National Sovereignty, and State-Control cooperation with China. It could be likely that African countries including Zambia, consider China as a facilitator to chart their own development course independent of Western policy prescriptions.

Carmody et al. (2012), Yuan et al. (2022, p.40) and Wang et al. (2014) recognized that three or more less clear-cut Chinese objectives pertaining to economic relations with Africa, was access to Africa's natural resources, exports markets for Chinese manufactured goods and sufficient economic stability for China to safeguard its citizens, and pursue its economic, and commercial interests. As I see it, Chinese companies, or corporations operating in Zambia, are guided by commercial opportunities. In the view of the fact that, China considers economic relations with Zambia as a means to appease objectives for its own economy as well as facilitate China's wider geopolitical aims. To give you an idea, it is readily apparent that China offers commercial relations with countries that are rich in raw materials or that have resources that China considers vital, such as those in Zambia. The Zambian economy has historically been contingent on the copper mining industry and possesses one of the largest deposits of copper in the world. One could question as to whether the Chinese investments in Zambia are generally an interest of the Zambian raw materials? China maintains that its relationship with Zambia is based on equal terms. Although it is evident that proof of an equal bilateral partnership rarely exists between Zambia and China, as China dictates the terms. Not to mention the fact that China's hegemony is tied to its stronghold on the Zambian economy.

On the opposite side of the argument, China has faced growing criticism for flaws such as lending to low-income countries with unstable finances, having a lack of transparency, and by not following the Paris Accords conditionalities. At the same time, China is also not a member of the Paris Club, whose objective is to track official lending and fix debt problems of countries. Official data on Chinese loans are not made publicly available, adding to the fact that China is not a member of the OECD (Carmody et al., 2022). Considering the fact that China is regarded to be less transparent in its finances and aid, these challenges are apparent in Zambia. It would seem that unconditionality, that is, aid without political conditions put forward by China fuels corruption in Zambia. China does not enhance transparency which can be seen as flawed, as compared to the Western model of economic growth. The way I see it, China's lending to Zambia is covered in secrecy, for the reason that the Zambian debt to China could be thought to be higher than amounts that are officially tracked or recorded (Carmody et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2022; Yuan et al., 2022, p.36).

On account of having little transparency in the Chinese lending operations, and since neither the full scope of the loans nor the conditions are fully known. It seems as though China does not clearly articulate its agenda. This also signifies that the general public cannot determine the terms and conditions of loans to recipient countries and to decide whether they will be beneficial. One could question whether China has ulterior motives behind its economic interventions in Zambia? It may be likely that China's intervention and investment in infrastructure development are genuine, since these efforts are altering Zambia's infrastructure to the better and are enabling the Zambian government to realize its development agenda by China building roads, railways and providing funding for infrastructure projects in the country.

How has foreign aid towards Zambia changed in the last decade? In a nutshell, change in terms of an upward trend regarding the relationship between Zambia and China, has only shown growth, in what can be described to be a neo-colonialist grip on Zambia by China. China has had as a business model that is pro-China interests, and without compromise, stands firm on its policies, biased in their nature, construed to ensure almost one-sided benefit, China almost always prevails as evidenced in the disparity whenever both sides of the deal are interrogated, whilst Zambia, whose administration has been inconsistent and because it seeks to appear democratic to the West for a back-up and potential outreach and cry for financial help. Also, because in Zambia, there are no schools of thought which any party can ascribe to, it almost always is destined to a colossal loss, every time it images the likes of China. Zambia, it seems, does not follow sound and good advice given by its financial institutions and organizations, lest there should be evidence of such, and therefore, is inconsistent with any aspect to negotiate a good and fair deal, whilst China stands firm with its pro-China biased policies attached to every loan or development project. China also seems to sign secret deals with each successive Zambian administration, so that at its time of choice, out of one-sided convenience, are revealed with the aim of challenging any contrasting views that Zambia could raise in an attempt at having a fair deal.

Whilst Zambia may feel it has some political freedom to meet China as a sovereign state, China owns almost every economic decision of substance that Zambia can ever want to make, because of its use of historical debt and the terms it introduces whenever such debts are forgiven or canceled in the light of new debts. This perpetuated the same injustice under the guise of economic engagement and partnership. China seems to turn a blind eye to corruption committed by corrupt government officials and lawmakers, whilst it keeps its finger on the pulse whenever Zambia asks for a fair deal or asks questions unfavorable to a space of benefit for China. China has made it standard business to not only export its biased policies, but also, with its own labor force for almost every project it brings into play in Zambia.

6.2 What is the role of China within foreign assistance to Zambia?

Judging from the literature, it is conspicuous that much of the debt owed to China pertains to substantial infrastructure projects like roads, railways, ports, the mining, and the energy sector.

It appears clear that China has surfaced as Zambia's substantial bilateral trading partner, one of Zambia's biggest bilateral lenders, in addition to being one of the biggest foreign investors in the African continent (Rapanyane, 2021). From my point of view, trade with China is a cornerstone of the Zambian economy in the view of the fact that infrastructure funded projects by China could be a sure sign that China has good intentions towards Zambia. Aside from supplying loans for infrastructure projects to Zambia as part of BRI, it is worth mentioning that China has brought development to Zambia in the energy, transport and telecommunications sectors. This has offered Zambia the potential to expand and develop in the infrastructure sector (Rapanyane and Shai, 2020; Carmody et al., 2012; Rapanyane, 2021). To further accentuate my point, the Tanzania- Zambia Railway is also a good exemplification of China and Zambia treating each other as friends with integrity. Over and above that, it may be considered that the rise of China's engagement in Zambia escalated through initiatives such as BRI. Which is another illustration or attempt by China to enhance political influence and strengthen ties between both Zambia and China.

At some stage in Zambian politics, the then presidential candidate, who later became president, Michael Sata, vowed to sever ties with China once elected. And if this serves for any measure of stakes, Michael Sata won the elections because perhaps the people of Zambia, had had enough, and had they known that the "King Cobra" as he was widely known, would stay true to his nature, and shed his hide, so that he repented his vow and instead of cut ties with China, chose to recommit and reiterate the vows, they the Zambians, could have perhaps voted differently. This perhaps is a cross section of the sentimental relationship between the people of Zambia, with exclusion of the politicians, and China as a whole. Others like Brautigam (2022) and Bagwandeen (2022) argue that China's lending is beneficial, and suggest that concerns about harsh terms, and loss of sovereignty, is to a great extent, exaggerated. If there is anything that is more certain, it is that China is willing to extend loans to poor African countries without demanding much in terms of governance reforms and anti-corruption measures. All things considered, one could say that the result has been projects that are bound by draconian lending conditions, are expensive to operate, and unlikely ever to produce decent returns in Zambia for instance. The manner China is responding, speaks to the vulnerability Zambia chooses to embrace, for there cannot always be a finger pointing at Zambia, without Zambia herself, taking ownership of her fate. There must be something about Zambia, that other countries when dealing with China, is missing.

How does BRI advance China's interests in Zambia? The current debate about China's lending via BRI identifies an interesting viewpoint about the dependency theory. Dependency according to (Kabonga, 2017) was characterized as economic development of a state whose national development policies rely on external influences. It might seem that while China's Belt and Road Initiative may have brought aims to strengthen infrastructure and trade to Zambia. The Chinese investment in infrastructure may also have negative impacts on the local community (Aalders et al., 2021). Moreover, it appears that China has brought with it a new form of core-periphery relations, as theorized in the Marxist analysis of the dependency theory, established in the works of Immanuel Wallerstein's World Systems Theory. The theory holds that the periphery is constricted to exporting natural resources to the core, while the core exports manufactured goods to the periphery (Agebebi and Virtanen, 2017).

The way I see it, the economic depiction that China targets for predatory loans, permits it to easily manipulate, or control markets, and seize control of exports and trade of the debtors, as seen in the cases of Zambia, for instance the Zambian employment sector when it comes to Chinese investment. The infrastructure and aid projects that appear to represent the Zambian gain, can be considered to be unfairly beneficial to Zambia. Unfairly because China and Zambia, gains regardless of the austerities Zambians may be subjected to in the process of trying to break-even or become profitable. Many of the skilled and unskilled workers who work on these large infrastructure projects in Zambia are Chinese expatriates sent from China (Zajonzt, 2020, Nkonde, 2020; Rapanyane, 2021; Wang et al., 2014). That means the employment opportunities created due to huge projects do not translate to meaningful engagement on the part of the Zambians, for it does not reflect positively on a graph of “projects" versus “job creation.” This further gives wrong stats that influence the economic outlook and make Zambia seem to not be investment-worthy to anyone else using such barometers, or reading such stats, except for say, China, that is instrumental in rigging the stats, and uses this disparity to appear as the only hand willing to help, and therefore, only hope; effectively making their terms, law. The Chinese-sponsored road bonanza in Zambia was criticized for being driven by Chinese supply. Similar instances are seen in Kenya where concerns of employment prospects were slim for the local residents during the building of the port by the Chinese. The local community did not partake in the gains from the building of the port (Bachmann and Musembi, 2021). It may appear that Chinese companies are unable to create jobs in Africa, or Zambia, owing to the fact that they bring in workers from China to fill job vacancies. Zambia and many other African countries with massive debt are unable to divert national funds to tackle unemployment. Instead, high levels of government debt go towards debt servicing.

With reference to the white papers on Chinese foreign aid, it can be observed that the Chinese government through BRI uses foreign aid as a lever to gain a stronger voice in global governance (Gort and Brooks, 2023, p.840; Zhang et al., 2022; Mulakala and Ji, 2021; Yang et al., 2018; Dunford, 2020; State Council Information Office, 2021, p.11; Yuan et al., 2022, p.40). Mutual benefit has also been an important principle of China’s aid policy. Since this concept is reinforced by the notion of equality, the nations involved are equal and not organized into North-South relationships between dominant and dominated countries. It can be noted that instead of China adopting Western liberal norms and values, China uses its right to promote its own values and vision of mutual benefit and respect to developing countries' perspective of their own needs. This shows a clear example of the dependency theory and China’s role in Zambia.

The dependency theory can be used to explain Zambia’s reliance on foreign aid from China. Zambia is a regular recipient of Chinese financing and Zambia is currently among the heavily indebted countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Zambia’s extreme dependence on loans from China has worsened its debt crisis as it has resulted in a debt burden that has distorted the country’s development. Due to the resources directed toward debt servicing, the debt crisis has restricted Zambia’s capacity to invest in critical growth-sustaining infrastructure. From the dependency theory’s perspective, the Chinese loans can be seen as a mechanism used by highly industrialized nations to maintain the dependence of the periphery on their economies under the pretense of assisting in achieving economic development. The Chinese loans and their conditionalities and their effects have further made the dependency theory relevant today in the case of Zambia. Besides hampering economic and human development in Zambia, as described in section 2.1, the loan conditionalities infringe on Zambia’s national sovereignty and restrict the Zambian government’s capacity to manage the country’s internal economic affairs. Developing countries like Zambia demand loans to improve their economic situation, although the conditions attached to the loans might worsen the situation.

6.3 What are the interlinkages between Chinese loans and economic and human development in Zambia?

This brings me to my next point in relation to the dept-trap. Evidently, it seems as though Zambia has become the ideal target for China’s soft power, owing to Zambia’s abundance in natural resources and China’s seemingly insatiable thirst for those resources. As a matter of fact, the Chinese strategy of lending seems to seek the upper hand over other creditors, or Western lenders. This is owing to China using collateral arrangements, much like lender-controlled revenue accounts, along with committing to retain the debt out of collective restructuring where China does not share the outcomes of its negotiations with other creditors as it does in Zambia. One must admit that although Chinese loans often entail collateral or guarantee for development loans, and since it appears that China is backed by collateral, we cannot ignore the fact that China often enjoys a high degree of seniority in these instances. Most notably, it is also apparent that Chinese loans have a ruinous or devastating effect when not reimbursed on time (Rapanyane and Shai, 2020).

China has been criticized for its lending practices that have been characterized as a 'debt-trap' (Brautigam, 2022; Camody, 2009; Wang et al., 2014; Singh, 2020; Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021). This is among the reasons that Chinese lending to Africa has been the subject of debate and controversy. Rapanyane and Shai, (2020) and Rapanyane (2021) have suggested that China is intentionally pursuing debt-trap diplomacy, by imposing harsh terms on its government counterparts and issuing contracts that permit it to seize strategic assets when debtor countries such as those such as Zambia, run into financial constraints. It is unknown to what extent China's hold on the Zambian economy is, for where would the impetus to seize state owned resources come from, if either, the debt is astronomically significant and warrants a degree of such action, or China's negotiations team are so shrewd that the Zambian counterparts, would be side blinded, and inevitably cheated.

To further accentuate my point, it is observable that there are some salient differences between the lending processes by China. If Zambia for example intends to apply for debt relief, its Chinese creditors can claim the rights to assets held in collateral, as seen in the cases of Zambia and Angola. The alleged Chinese takeover of the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC), and the Lusaka International Airport, the Zambia Electricity Supply Corporation (ZESCO) (Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021; Rapanyane, 2021) and lastly the state-owned Zambia Forestry and Forestry Industries Corporation (ZAFFICO) (Nkonde, 2020). Another alleged example of acquisition is that of Angola (Rapanyane, 2021; Eickhoff, 2022) were its natural resources were used as collateral for loans.

The aforementioned examples show that Chinese lending can be seen as essentially predatory in Zambia, and the above-mentioned country. China uses escrow or guarantee to collect revenue from the borrower as repayment security rather than the traditional World Bank, and IMF financing. Although, one could assume that African leaders including those of Zambia who try to avoid the Western conditionality are now stuck in a state of uncertainty. Hence, from my perspective Chinese take-over of major state assets should not be disregarded. As I see it, Zambia and for example Angola, benefit from Chinese built roads, infrastructure buildings, and activities that support development in both countries. Although when looking at the case of Angola (Rapanyane, 2021; Eickhoff, 2022) which mortgaged future oil production of a valuable, non-renewable resource, the disparity in the transaction is obvious. This in many ways, could be seen as a costly trade for Angola, one might assume that Angola's need for infrastructure was immediate, and that is exactly what China provides when no one else is willing to do so. Although on the other side of the argument, perhaps we should also point out the fact that rather than usher in financial recovery, China has gained control of Angola's economy, and its petroleum reserves, mirroring the case with Zambia in particular. The so-called "Beijing Consensus" where China's soft diplomatic policy entails a strict respect for African sovereignty and a hands-off approach to internal issues (Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021; Wang et al., 2014) in short, issuing loans and infrastructure without any political strings about democracy, transparency or human rights attached. Poses a risk to the Zambian economy as this leaves Zambia struggling to repay its debts and therefore vulnerable to the pressure from China.

It is clear that China's non-interference model, unlike the Western model, gives African countries including Zambia more perceived freedom and potentially opportunity to work for immediate economic development. One can see it in a way such that, to the West, China's approach threatens the promotion of democracy, transparency, liberalism and free trade, engaging instead with authoritarianism, economic development at the expense of civil progress as well as strengthened political and economic ties. Despite all sorts of revelations made when it comes to China, or the West, African countries such as Zambia, particularly with China, is seen, an important trade, investment and economic partner.

The dependence theory can be used to speculate that rampant exploitation would less likely occur between equal partners than unequal partners (Agebebi and Virtanen, 2017), yet we can see that China uses unfair trading practices and confidentiality clauses in their contracts. China's role as a supplier of raw materials, cheap labor and unequal exchange relations between developing countries can be viewed as contributing to poor economic growth in Zambia, or at least economic growth, which is unequally distributed, favoring the higher tiers at the expense of the poor half of the populace, due to increasing corruption, since the economy of Zambia is conditioned by the development and expansion of the Chinese economy. China is developing debt-traps and dependency and making poor nations as Zambia accumulate large amounts of debt and interest. Zambia has received massive loans from China, the huge debt it owes to China makes it difficult for it to invest in its own economy and development. It is apparent that Chinese national interests are secured by long-lasting loans which promote debt-traps

(Rapanyane and Shai, 2020) that make it difficult for Zambia and the aforementioned example country to pay back. It is also evident that governments may become dependent on Chinese investments to develop the country, for the sake of economic growth, although these projects may have negative effects on the local community where these projects part-take (Aalders et al. 2021).

The economic indicators provided in graphs in section 2.2 shed evidence that Zambian debt has grown between 2010 and 2020. GDP per capita has grown too, but since the share of people living in poverty more or less has remained unchanged it is clear that the economic gains have not been distributed between all tiers of the populace. One could thus argue that the policies in place that allowed government spending to increase have not yielded an equally distributed growth. Perhaps this would be a warning flag that increasing government spending, financed by Chinese loans, would not bring with it prosperity, but rather corruption and debt. As seen in figure 3 in section 2.2 there is a correlation between increasing corruption and increasing debt. Warning flag or not, the debt would continue to grow and exacerbated when the Zambian economy fell into recession as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic created new opportunities for China to cement its engagement in Zambia, owing to the reason that China stepped up its support to African countries including those like Zambia. For Zambia, the past debt cancellations may have created a hazard due to the fact that Zambian leaders may have over-borrowed in the belief that lenders would cancel unpaid debts. The debt is seen to weaken the economy by forcing the Zambian government to spend more money on interest payments when it should be spending on national development (CUTS International Lusaka, 2019; Zambian parliament, 2023a; Zambian parliament, 2023b; Zambian parliament, 2023c; Parliamentary Budget Office, 2023). The Zambian government's proposed budget deficit of 7.7% of GDP which the government intends to finance via domestic debt and concessions loans, showed that it may have had a negative effect on economic growth (Zambian parliament, 2023a, Parliamentary Budget Office, 2023).

From my perspective, the fiscal deficit is a shortfall in the Zambian government's income compared with its spending. This implies that the Zambian government's expenditure is greater than its revenue, and that the government is spending beyond their means, leading to economic instability. And international loans, such as the Chinese loans, become a means to an end, to fill the gap between income and expenditure. In relation to China wanting to stimulate growth in Zambia, it was found that China’s economic development substitutes for socio-economic growth, and development in Zambia (Singh, 2020; Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021;

Carmody, 2009; Zajontz, 2022; Bagwandeen, 2022; Brautigam, 2022; Mwiinga and Willima, 2019). This implies that intentions of growth, in terms of reducing poverty and increasing the well-being of the people in the lower income tiers, have not been realized by increasing government expenditure with the help of foreign aid and loans, and that the economic growth, in terms of GDP per capita, which Zambia experienced, has not been distributed across all tiers of society, but rather at the top. This is supported by the fact that the poverty rate has remained unchanged, with more than half of the population living in poverty (as described in section 2.2).

7. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to explore the dynamic interlinkages between foreign aid on the other hand and economic and human development in Zambia during the period of 2010-2020. Further, the main focus of foreign aid is on China and its loans to Zambia, since China as a new player has entered the sphere of influence encompassing Zambia. To meet this aim, the study was guided by the following research questions: How has foreign aid towards Zambia changed in the last decade? What is the role of China within foreign assistance to Zambia? What are the interlinkages between Chinese loans and economic and human development in Zambia?

To answer the research questions, recapitulation is in order. Chinese investment capital is assigned to infrastructure and extraction of Zambian raw materials, given that these are the areas where Zambia has a lot of undercapitalized assets. China has been a major economic symbol for Zambia and at the same time issued favorable loans and investments without conditions to Zambia, in contrast to Western creditors. In addition to supplying loans for infrastructure projects to Zambia as part of BRI, China has brought development to Zambia in the energy, transport, and telecommunications sectors (Rapanyane and Shai, 2020; Carmody et al. 2012; Rapanyane, 2021).

It was also highlighted that China was willing to extend loans to poor African countries without demanding much in terms of governance reforms and anti-corruption measures (Cormier, 2022; Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021; Wang et al. 2014; Yuan et al., 2022, p.36). It appears as though China’s intervention and investment in infrastructure development are genuine, attributed to the fact that these efforts are altering Zambia’s infrastructure to the better and are enabling the Zambian government to realize its development agenda by China building roads, railways and providing funding for infrastructure projects in the country.

In addition to that, it was also found that China considers economic relations with Zambia as a means to appease objectives for its own economy as well as facilitate China’s wider geopolitical aims, since Chinese companies, or corporations operating in Zambia, are guided by commercial opportunities. Official data on Chinese loans are not made publicly available, which makes for circulated statistics approximations of the debt owed. Further, China is not a member of the Paris Club which tracks sovereign borrowing from official bilateral creditors, and not a member of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) which requires countries to run a free-market economy. Additionally, it was highlighted that China does not take part in that organization’s Creditor Reporting System (Carmody et al., 2022). The Chinese rarely publish information regarding financing of contracts. This limits the transparency in the Chinese lending operations and financial flows. It is likely that recommendations for a borrowing strategy that limits the risk of debt distress cannot be offered to Zambia, unless the exact debt which Zambia owes to China, is made apparent.

The mismeasurement of the external debt has potentially significant consequences for countries like Zambia that have borrowed heavily from China. It was also highlighted that China's targets for predatory loans permits it to easily manipulate, or control markets, and seize control of exports and trade of the debtors. China was seen to intentionally pursue debt- trap diplomacy (Rapanyane and Shai, 2020; Rapanyane; 2021) by imposing harsh terms on its government counterparts and issuing contracts that permit it to seize strategic assets when debtor countries such as those such as Zambia, run into financial constraints. The infrastructure and aid projects that appear to represent the Zambian gain, can be considered to be unfairly beneficial to Zambia. In my perspective, the Zambian government must take full responsibility for the debt situation as they have in recent years received ample warnings from the IMF, World Bank donors (Ofstad and Tjønneland, 2019).

Foreign aid for Zambia has not changed as such; there is still an influx of it. The only change that has occurred is having a new development actor entering the field, which is China. What has also changed are successive Zambian governments that ride on the ticket of either purging relations with China or mending those with the West, whilst being subjected to the same, and even increasing influence and further manipulation by either China or the West. The other changes can surely be the material value for the debt over the financial value or even political.

To elaborate further, China has on several occasions, despite being owed 17.6 % of total debt for Zambia, whilst the West 45 %, has in contrast to the fractional distribution of stake, demonstrated a strong appetite and even taken actions, to take-over government and state-owned utilities such as ZNBC, ZESCO and other national Key-point status entities. A clear change on the part of China towards its sworn pledges to never interfere with sovereignty and internal affairs of its trade partners like Zambia.

Regarding economic development, whilst GDP per capita shows a modest improvement, corruption and poverty have increased, highlighting that human development has not caught up with economic development and that the gains of the latter are not equally distributed among the socioeconomic tiers of Zambian society. This can also be seen by the recent stagnation in the growth of the HDI. The increase in corruption seems to align with the increase in alienation to the West whilst a stronger relation with China. Zambia's debt has also grown fivefold and propensity to default has been exceeded so that Zambia actually defaulted repayment of its Eurobond. In short, the debt is increasing faster than any completion and subsequent commission of projects that should generate funds to repay the loans, or there is gross mismanagement of the completed projects that must grow the economy and in turn, pay off the loans.

In examining foreign aid in Zambia, I have focused on economic and human development and Chinese lending. One major question that has arisen is how my results hold up when comparing Zambia, to other African countries with similar economic situations, but with less influence from China. By making a comparison, it would be interesting to examine how government debt and corruption develop in a country, with otherwise similar features to Zambia, but without a heavy reliance on Chinese lending. Then one could study the countries over time and single out whether the reliance of foreign aid has the same impact on the comparison country, like it has had on Zambia. This is a setting for future research.

Another strand of potential research connects to the term "neo-colonialism", which was re-occurring in the literature (Matambo and Onwuegbuchulam, 2021; Wang et al., 2014; Zajontz, 2020). This shows that the general characteristics of China's relations with many countries including its relations with Zambia bore similarities to the European colonial power relations with Africa. Future research could investigate whether China exhibits neo-colonial tendencies to undermine the sovereignty of African countries, much like Western countries have done in the past. More research could increase our deeper knowledge of whether the result of neocolonialism in terms of foreign capital being used for exploitation rather than for the development of the less developed parts of the world.

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